
City of La Crosse



Restore Everyone's Neighborhood Effectively & Win

A Community approach to neighborhood revitalization

Endorsed by the City of La Crosse Common Council
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LA CROSSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD "RENEW" PROGRAM

Table of Contents

I. Overview/Background	3
Factors Leading to Neighborhood Deterioration	3
New Framework for Action	4
Community Partners	5
II. Problem Definition	5
Problem Verification	5
Links with other Community Efforts	6
Learning More About the Problem	6
Interim Action	7
III. Root Cause of the Problem: Lack of "Ownership" in the Neighborhood Community	8
IV. Action Plan	9
Goal Area #1: Involve and Assist in Neighborhood Organizations	10
Goal Area #2: Revitalize and Clean Up Neighborhoods	12
Goal Area #3: Provide Positive Alternatives for Youth	16
Goal Area #4: Proactive Code Enforcement	18
Goal Area #5: Tough Law Enforcement	21
Goal Area #6: Increase State and Federal Financial Assistance	23
V. Assessment	25
Overall Assessment	25
Organization Evaluation	26

LA CROSSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD "RENEW" PROGRAM

I. Overview/Background

The City of La Crosse has several neighborhoods that are experiencing a variety of social and physical problems. While the City and others have been addressing some of these problems for many years, a concerted effort by many individuals and agencies needs to be undertaken in a more systematic, results-oriented approach. Many times, these efforts result in addressing the symptoms of the problem and not the cause. This document sets forth an action plan that is a starting point for achieving what living in a neighborhood is all about. While some will argue that these City neighborhoods have improved in recent years, it is being suggested that the bar needs to be raised and everyone's expectations must be much higher. This effort is being called Neighborhood RENEW. RENEW stands for Restore Everyone's Neighborhood Effectively and WIN.

This effort follows the SARA approach to problem solving. SARA stands for Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment. La Crosse's neighborhoods have been at a crossroads for many years. The efforts to stabilize the City's neighborhoods began over 20 years ago with a program to rehabilitate the City's housing stock. Today, over 900 homes have been rehabilitated, yet over 50 percent of the City's homes are older than 50 years old. The City continued this effort at the insistence of City residents when in 1989 the City created a single-family zoning district. The City began a neighborhood planning process four years ago and completed its first neighborhood plan for the Powell - Hood Parks, Hamilton School neighborhood. The Common Council adopted the City's second neighborhood plan for the Lower North Side in 1999. While these efforts have begun to address many of the physical problems in these two areas of the City, it is recognized that there is a long way to go and that these plans have not addressed many of the social problems that exist in the City and in these neighborhoods. Creating a better mechanism for the implementation of these plans must also be addressed.

FACTORS LEADING TO NEIGHBORHOOD DETERIORATION.

1) Housing Factors

Much of the housing stock in the City was built prior to 1939 and many of the homes were poorly constructed. Other factors that lead to housing deterioration include termite damage and flood plain designation. Lead paint issues are now a major issue to deal with during rehabilitation efforts. The costs of housing and increasing poverty have also been contributing to housing deterioration over the years. At present, there is no market incentive for the private sector to view distressed neighborhoods as a target market, while other negative factors provide a disincentive for single-family homeowners to think of these neighborhoods as a safe place to invest their life's savings. Over the last 10 years the City has lost, on average, 24 single-family homes per year through demolition, while new single family housing starts have averaged 22. With a net decrease of two single-family homes per year, the City has not enjoyed the boom in single family home construction that the suburban areas have experienced.

2) Zoning Factors

According to the 1990 Census of Population and Housing, over 50 percent of the City's dwelling units were renter occupied. That number has certainly not decreased since then. There is too much multiple dwelling zoning in some of the City's neighborhoods where the result is a predominance of renter-occupied housing versus owner-occupied housing. The City's zoning code lacks urban design standards regarding landscaping, open space, parking and building character for multiple dwelling developments. Several institutions and churches have expanded parking lots over the last 20 years as their campuses have grown. The expansion of surface parking has taken a toll on the livability of some the City's neighborhoods.

3) Property Maintenance and Building Deterioration

Recent visits to City neighborhoods show deteriorated buildings, unlicensed/junk vehicle storage, unkempt properties that include stored or discarded appliances, large items, tires, trash and vegetative material strewn and stored in the rear of properties, broken windows, graffiti, and overgrown lawns and yards. There have been observations that properties that abut unpaved alleys have a higher incidence of stored and stacked refuse and an overgrowth of vegetation. All of these property maintenance and building deterioration issues present an overall mind-set of neighborhood deterioration. The City has not had a systematic approach to code enforcement.

4) Concentration of Social and Public Services

One south side neighborhood is said to have more than 50 persons under the supervision of the Department of Corrections Probation and Parole division. With the abundance of social service providers in the City, there is a tendency to concentrate social service recipients close to needed services. It has been noted that many of the probation and parole clients also have alcohol and chemical dependency issues. This leads to a perception that criminal activity is rampant in these neighborhoods. Large numbers of poor people are also concentrated in several of these neighborhoods.

5) Pull Factor by Suburbs

The City has little vacant land for development for a wide array of housing choices. State rules that loosen up the requirements for on-site septic systems also promote suburban and rural development. The Census data show that there is a movement of residents to surrounding communities because the City has not been able to accommodate housing needs. Other factors such as "white flight" may also be at play here. While the City of La Crosse has a higher tax rate than suburban areas, the City has a higher level of services in many categories. There is a "lack of newness" in the City in regard to schools, parks, and public facilities and in some neighborhoods there is a perception that there are reduced level of city-services such as street sweeping and park maintenance. It is difficult for the City to compete with the suburbs when state policies harm the city and wealth continues to move out. There has also been a social value established that the ideal home is a big house on a large lot in the suburbs. The first four issues, when taken together, have a tendency to increase the pull factor by the suburbs.

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Several of the City's neighborhoods have the same characteristics including an older housing stock, a diverse population, a predominance of renter-occupied housing versus owner-occupied housing, alcohol and chemical dependents, and deteriorated properties. While the City has

within its realm some of the tools to address the physical problems, the City needs the help of the broader community to address all of the physical and social problems.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Mayor's Office
Common Council
Department of Public Works
Street Department
Attorney's Office
City Planning Department
Police Department
Refuse and Recycling

City Partners:

Treasurer
City Clerk
Assessor's Office
Inspection Department
Parks and Recreation Department
Fire Department

Neighborhood Partners:

Children and youth
Tenants
Property Owners
Home Owners
Businesses
Place of Grace
Neighborhood Groups
Elderly Residents
Disabled Residents
Hmong and minority community Churches
Institutions (such as the medical Centers)
Boys and Girls Club
Apartment Owners Association
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
School District and teachers

(Neighborhood Schools)
Schools and Universities
La Crosse County including Human Services and Health Department
Courts
County Sheriff and District Attorney
UW-Extension
WI Department of Corrections
Federal and State Elected Officials Staff
United Coulee Region
Livable Neighborhoods
RSVP
Lenders
La Crosse Community Foundation
Other Foundations
News Media and others

II . Problem Definition: Neighborhood Deterioration

In order to define the problem clearly, the first step is to verify that there is a problem and then learn more about the problem. Once the problem has been identified and while information is gathered to learn more about the problem, it is crucial to take interim actions that can begin to address the problem. This section details these three efforts.

PROBLEM VERIFICATION

Without a doubt, La Crosse has several neighborhoods that are experiencing deteriorated conditions. These deteriorating conditions manifest themselves primarily in the physical deterioration that is seen as one travels through parts of the City. They are illustrated as one observes deteriorated and unkempt properties, criminal activity, junk vehicle storage, appliances, large items, tires, trash and vegetative material strewn and stored in the rear of properties, broken windows, graffiti, overgrown lawns and yards, and perhaps just one boarded

up building such as the Plaid Pantry (now condemned). The City began a neighborhood planning process four years ago as a first step in addressing neighborhood issues. While those efforts have met with some successes, the problems cannot be solved by the efforts of just a few City Departments and residents. The effort to RENEW La Crosse's neighborhoods will take many years to complete and it will require the collective force of those individuals and groups listed above, all of whom have a stake in this City.

It has been suggested that the appearance of neighborhoods is the result of the City not caring about certain areas. While it is not true that the City has forgotten or left behind certain neighborhoods, that negative perception can be the same as reality. Residents may perceive that the deterioration of their neighborhood is evidence that the City does not care, regardless of the reality that the City has not reduced (and may have increased) services to their neighborhood. While the City is not blameless, neighborhood deterioration is the result of a complex set of factors all working together to the detriment of the entire City. If residents and property owners feel that the City won't step in, then why should they care? The result will be that the problems will simply continue and grow worse.

LINKS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY EFFORTS

As noted above, the City of La Crosse has the capability to resolve many of the physical blight and deterioration problems through City forces and programs. The City is not set up to deal with some of the social problems that seem to go hand in hand with neighborhood deterioration. Recently, the ***Compass 2 Community-Building Process*** identified that community action must address the financial challenges, substance abuse, youth and families at risk, and diversity issues that face the La Crosse County and Houston County region. These four issues are manifested in the City of La Crosse's most troubled and at-risk neighborhoods.

The City Vision 2000 Master Plan focuses on Downtown Revitalization. The plan calls for the revitalization of the Downtown "Neighborhood" through various reinvestment efforts. Two of the General Recommendations in the plan concern the neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown. The first is to reinforce the linkage between the downtown and these surrounding residential neighborhoods. The second calls for the revitalization of the surrounding residential neighborhoods through the inclusion of basic neighborhood services as part of the downtown business mix and complementary streetscaping and wayfinding improvements.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE PROBLEM

While it has been stated that there is a set of complex factors working together that bring about neighborhood deterioration, some simple cause and effect relationships are thought to exist. These relationships can be tested and resolved as the players learn more about the problem(s), the root cause of the problem(s), and the solutions.

Several symptoms have been labeled **Root Cause Symptoms**. As outlined below, the main root cause of neighborhood deterioration is that the ownership of the neighborhoods has been compromised. Many properties in the neighborhood look as if no one cares about them. One sign of neighborhood deterioration is ***Criminal Activity***. There is a perception that gang activity is widespread in the neighborhoods and that drug sales (sometimes via gang members) are rampant. In order to combat this activity, the City has, for several years, implemented the "Another Way" program to divert youth away from gang activities. Many times, criminal activity involves repeat offenders. Other types of criminal activity include child abuse/neglect

and verbal confrontations/assaults. As part of the RENEW effort, data on criminal activity (historic/current) will be obtained. This will assist in determining whether criminal activity has increased or decreased in the City. It may be important to compare La Crosse with similar-sized cities as well as other cities in the area.

Another symptom of neighborhood deterioration is a **perceived lack of City services**. It has been said that some residents feel the City does not sweep the streets very often in some neighborhoods. As evidenced by recent photos of the City's neighborhoods, the City does have a problem with appliance removal, bulky item removal, storage of tires and other items, unsecured trash, lack of weed and lawn mowing, and code enforcement in general. The City must examine the methods by which trash is collected. Currently the City has programs for alley paving, tree planting, housing rehabilitation, housing replacement, and federal CDBG funds for blight elimination, etc., and all of these programs will continue to play a part in neighborhood revitalization. Some of these programs must be stepped up, however.

Two trends or perceptions have been identified as major causes for concern in the neighborhoods. **Reversing these two perceptions and trends will go a long way to regain the trust of neighborhood residents so that the City and other governmental entities are seen as committed to the City's neighborhoods.** These two trends are:

- 1) There appears to be a correlation between police activity and deteriorated properties.
"Where a piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, or a window is smashed, many residents would think that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise and will modify their behavior accordingly."
- 2) There appears to be a correlation between rental properties and criminal activity
"There is evidence that 'unattended' behavior leads to the breakdown of community controls. A stable neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each others' children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening environment."

-- from, **Broken Windows** by James Q. Olson and George L. Kelling, March 1982.

INTERIM ACTION

Project RENEW must be ACTION ORIENTED; positive results must be shown in order to achieve buy-in from the community. To date, the City has taken the following Interim Actions:

1. Beginning November 1, 2000, the City Zoning and Inspection Department implemented a system of reallocating resources to divide the City into seven districts. Instead of having one or two persons conducting code enforcement, the City will now have seven.
2. The City Zoning and Inspection Department along with the City Attorney's office are working on the issue of tires, junk, and appliance clean up via possible ordinance amendment and/or changes in procedure.
3. A working group has suggested that a high priority should be given to the cleanup of high visibility areas along Jackson Street, 7th Street and 4th Street. A demonstration or pilot area for the RENEW effort will be the Powell-Hood Park Hamilton neighborhood.

This primarily involves eliminating public consumption, litter-trash removal, large item pickup, unlicensed vehicle removal (on and off the street), appliance removal, tire removal, and alley clean-up efforts.

4. Maps have been created to depict neighborhood resources, and ownership and dwelling unit counts as a way to begin to determine whether there is a relationship to problem areas and ownership patterns.

III. Root Cause of Problem: Lack of "Ownership" in the Neighborhood community

Over the years, the ownership of properties in the City has tended to migrate to a predominance of rental property rather than owner-occupied property. The 1990 Census identified that over 50 percent of the City's occupied dwelling units are rental units rather than owner occupied. The 2000 Census data is not available at this time and the City doesn't know for sure whether this trend has continued. However, based on data from building and demolition permits over the last 10 years the data show that the predominant construction activity in the City has been apartment units.

The term "ownership" in this context has a broader meaning. While the actual ownership of a property is part of that meaning, the term also has the meaning of a "stakeholder." The City and community partners listed earlier are the stakeholders in the City's neighborhoods. This effort must result in the coming together of all of the stakeholders to demonstrate that everyone must take ownership of the City's neighborhood not just the actual neighborhood residents. As noted elsewhere, if the neighborhood residents feel that the public sector has written off a neighborhood then the neighborhood will continue to decline. The City's neighborhoods must be viewed at the basic building block of a healthy community.

How can Project RENEW create a sense of "ownership" in the neighborhood?

1. A priority must focus on raising the expectations of residents
2. Increase communication between City and County departments
3. The public, neighborhood residents, property owners, and City and County departments must be educated about the root causes of neighborhood problems
4. Change the way of doing business (ordinances, enforcement etc.)
5. There remains data/facts to be obtained from a variety of sources. There must not be a temptation however to overanalyze or spend too much time gathering data and information since many activities can be undertaken in short order.
6. Establish benchmarks (i.e. number of structures with problems such as weeds/grass cutting, garbage/junk vehicles, dilapidated structures, drug houses)

IV. ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan for the RENEW Program consists of six goal areas which have been identified as areas of focus for all Community Partners. A lead partner, who will coordinate the efforts for a goal area, has been identified for each goal. Each of the goal areas contain a statement of the overall goal, a problem statement, some of the challenges faced in achieving the goal and finally solutions, or strategies, aimed at achieving each goal.

An early contributor to RENEW activities will be the Safe and Sound Program. In December of 2000, The La Crosse Boys and Girls Club was awarded a \$233,000 grant through the statewide Safe and Sound Grant Program. A complementary program, Another Way (see Goal Area #3), was funded separately and will receive \$40,000. The Boys and Girls club will administer the grant with the help of the La Crosse Police Department and the UW - La Crosse National Youth Sports Program.

Safe and Sound involves mobilizing community resources to implement a comprehensive, pro-active, collaborative effort in specific areas with above average crime rates. The goal is to significantly reduce crime and violence, and create a healthier environment to support the positive growth and development of our children.

The Safe and Sound demonstration area includes one of La Crosse's oldest neighborhoods, with an estimated population of 6,350 people and encompasses roughly 120 blocks. The boundaries are Green Bay Street on the south, West Avenue on the east, Cass Street on the north, and Third Street/South Avenue on the west. This demonstration area is the same as the one designated for the RENEW program.

Safe and Sound will work in collaboration with the Neighborhood RENEW project in the demonstration area. Safe and Sound is a community-based anti-crime initiative that attacks the problem of youth crime and violence on three fronts. The three fronts of the Safe and Sound Program coincide with three of the RENEW project's six goal areas and are included under the solutions heading for those goal areas. The three methods of the safe and sound program are:

- 1. Positive Alternatives for Youth (RENEW Goal Area #3):** Safe and Sound - Safe Places give children and teenagers safe places to go that offer positive, constructive activities during the critical after-school, evening, weekend and summer hours.
- 2. Neighborhood Organizing (RENEW Goal Area #1):** Community Partners go door-to-door in specific neighborhoods and plan events to share information and help residents support law enforcement and neighborhood revitalization.
- 3. Tough Law Enforcement (RENEW Goal Area #5):** Federal, state and local authorities cooperate and communicate to target gangs and drug pushers in the

demonstration area neighborhoods. Safe and Sound's goal is to reduce violent crime bringing resources together like never before.

The details of each of the Safe and Sound Programs can be found under the Solutions heading in the corresponding RENEW Goal Area.

GOAL AREA #1: INVOLVE AND ASSIST IN NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

(Lead RENEW Partner: City Planning Department)

Goal: Assist in forming permanent neighborhood organizations as the mechanism to open dialogue between all parties, the City should facilitate this effort but not dictate the effort.

Problem Statement: There may be a lack of faith by some residents in public officials with the City being identified as being part of the problem.

There may be a perception that the City is apathetic towards neighborhood issues since the City has been slow to act.

The problems in the City's neighborhoods are too large and complex to be solved by just the City.

Challenges: There is a lack of understanding of the root causes of neighborhood deterioration.

There are misperceptions about the scale of the neighborhood problems by various parties.

Solutions:

1. **Neighborhood Organizing** (Safe and Sound Goal #2). The Boys and Girls Club and the La Crosse Police Department will assist in neighborhood organizing efforts, as well as to enhance/integrate existing groups such as Neighborhood Watch. Through informational fliers, neighborhood focus groups and working meetings, the neighborhood will be involved in every area, from conducting the meetings to implement the initiatives. Activities will largely mirror the community's need. This will involve partnerships with various City of La Crosse Government agencies and community support groups.
2. The City will assist with the establishment of a permanent and more formal neighborhood organization for the Powell - Hood Park Hamilton School neighborhood that represents the true diversity of this fragile neighborhood.
3. All neighborhood groups will be required to form a permanent organization in each neighborhood prior to receiving City staff services.

4. The City will establish a “neighborhood fund” to absorb the costs of mailing out a periodic newsletter highlighting neighborhood issues, trends and events. Other uses of the fund could be earmarked for enhancements such as paint or flower plantings.
5. The City will form a citywide neighborhood council with representatives of all city neighborhoods as a mechanism for the exchange of ideas, information, and solutions.
6. The City has been asked to assist in the preparation of a neighborhood plan for the area between Jackson Street and Cass Street. This planning process will begin after January 1, 2001.
7. Work with the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association to reinforce their efforts on the implementation of a \$200,000 grant from The Freeman Foundation aimed at Community Integration Training (CTI). The CTI will focus on helping refugee families get to know neighbors, understand and become involved with neighborhood issues and the local community in general, good citizenship, volunteer opportunities and other resources.

Actions Initiated/Completed:

1. The City unveiled the Neighborhood RENEW effort in November 2000, at Hamilton School.

Goal Area #1 Partners

Mayor's Office	Hmong Mutual Assistance Association
Common Council	Minority Community/Groups
Department of Public Works	Churches
Attorney's Office	Institutions (such as the medical centers)
City Planning Department	Boys and Girls Club
Police Department	School District and teachers (Hamilton School)
Inspection Department	Schools and Universities
Parks and Recreation Department	La Crosse County, including Human Services
Fire Department	Municipal Court
Tenants	UW-Extension
Property Owners	
Home Owners	
Businesses	
Place of Grace	
Neighborhood Groups	

GOAL AREA #2: REVITALIZE AND CLEAN UP NEIGHBORHOODS

(Lead RENEW Partner: City Public Works Department)

Goal: Coordinate the actions and activities of the various partners in a comprehensive proactive fashion to restore the City's most troubled neighborhoods. This will provide a structural solution to the problems including zoning, housing, property maintenance, and public services.

Problem Statement: A comprehensive approach to community problem solving does not exist presently that recognizes the complex nature of neighborhood deterioration. While physical blight can be reduced and eliminated, the social issues are more complex. A coordinated effort must be undertaken to facilitate citizen participation and education, improve code enforcement, upgrade infrastructure maintenance levels and improvements, develop community incentives, and upgrade City services necessary to accomplish goals and keep La Crosse a livable and sustainable city.

For Neighborhood RENEW to work, a team approach to neighborhood cleanup and revitalization is essential. The team consists of the various code enforcement personnel throughout the City: buildings, health, fire, public works, zoning, police, tax and license, human rights, solid waste, personnel, and legal staff. This approach combines the resources of the City through code enforcement, solid waste collection, infrastructure maintenance and improvement, and beautification, with the participation, direction, and commitment of the neighborhoods to form a partnership between the community and the City of La Crosse. While the City has no staff dedicated specifically toward this effort, the City should consider such a position to act as liaison and coordinator among this team and for the public.

Challenges: The clean-up and revitalization effort must show initial positive results in order to achieve long term benefits. While there are programs in place to deal with many of the problems, it must finally be recognized that the City has been part of the problem. The biggest challenge will be to rezone these neighborhoods to allow for some density, but not at the expense of the single-family homeowner. The City will need additional financial resources for some of these efforts, however the City will need to examine perhaps the redeployment of personnel on occasion as part of this effort.

Solutions:

1. RENEW the City commitment to implement the Powel - Hood Park Hamilton School Neighborhood Plan. Implement the specific recommendations in the plan. For example, the plan called for the creation of an "Orchids" program to recognize those who have refurbished their homes. Another idea outlined in the plan was the "park a year" program where major park improvement would be targeted to those neighborhood parks needing rejuvenation. It has been suggested that the name Hood Park gives an overall connotation of the area as "the hood." The City's Facility Naming Committee could consider renaming the park as part of a rededication process once the shelter project is complete. The parkland is said to

have originated from the Michel Brewing Company. There are numerous solutions in the plan that will go a long way in demonstrating that the neighborhood plan is not gathering dust.

2. As part of the Code Enforcement program, the City needs to continue to improve the processing time from complaint or order to clean up. The City has begun to address the clean-up time frame to reduce that time frame to five working days. The RENEW effort is also attempting to streamline the processing time by making the Board of Public Works the appeal entity rather than having the Board approve every clean-up by City forces. The City, through the Police Department has introduced an Interdepartmental Service Request Form. The form can be used by any City Department to report a suspected code or ordinance violation. This will further the notion that these neighborhoods need many watchful eyes, not just the Inspection Department. Block captains of neighborhood watch programs are another source of watchful eyes. Again, this program is intended to be a team effort from all parties.
3. **Significantly reduce problems with solid waste collection and disposal, including trash, large items, appliances, tires, brush, and junk automobiles**
 - Action Step #1. Evaluate weekly trash collection and bi-weekly collection of large items to determine what changes in the City collection contract could be made to reduce current problems. Consider totes (large City supplied trash containers), weekly collection of large items, etc., with the primary goal of keeping alleys & boulevards neater with consideration given to cost, applicability citywide, and impact on recycling. Get input from solid waste professionals, City Inspectors & Planning Dept. on options. Contract will be re-bid in next few months for 2002-2006. Responsible party - Public Works and Refuse & Recycling.
 - Action Step #2. Evaluate City refuse handling rules to see if there are changes in the rules or in public education efforts that could reduce problems with scattered or loose trash, appliances, tires, large items, and other solid waste that can affect neighborhood aesthetics & health. Responsible party - Public Works, Inspection and Refuse & Recycling.
 - Action Step #3. Work with Inspection Dept. and Police Dept. to provide timely removal of junk and abandoned vehicles from private and public property. Responsible party - Inspection & Police.
 - Action Step #4. Provide efficient and timely enforcement of regulations related to trash handling. This is covered in much greater detail under Goal Area #4, and does not require further discussion here. Responsible party - Inspection
4. **Have gravel alleys paved in areas where there is neighborhood deterioration** (Use CDBG funds if applicable). Paved alleys significantly improve back yard appearances, eliminate dust, mud, and drainage problems, and reduce trash problems.

- Action Step #1. Identify all alleys in the target area that are zoned multi-family and are 60% rental (i.e. meet Council criteria for introduction for paving without a petition), and ask the Council Member to introduce resolutions for paving of these alleys. Responsible party - Public Works, Planning Department
 - Action Step #2. Prepare a one-page summary describing the benefits of alley paving and describing the process and assessment options to give to property owners. Responsible party - Public Works
 - Action Step #3. Work with Council Members to modify the requirements for introducing alleys for paving that may not meet the specific criteria under Action Step #1, especially the zoning requirement, but warrant paving. Responsible party - Public Works and City Council
 - Action Step #4. Consider a program for deferring alley paving assessments (with or without interest) until a property changes ownership for property owners who fall below a specific income level. This could especially benefit retired property owners with limited income.
5. **Significantly improve the average quality of housing in the target neighborhood, especially by repairing or removing those dwellings in the poorest condition.**
- Action Step #1. Continue to use and attempt to step up the Housing Replacement Program in these neighborhoods to replace dilapidated structures with new houses. Use the Street Department for demolition when practical to further leverage available federal funds. Have inspectors identify candidate properties for acquisition and demolition. The City should formally solicit banks, institutions and private developers to develop new single family homes in these neighborhoods. The formation of a Community Development Corporation should be high on everyone's priority list. Responsible party - Planning Department/Housing Rehabilitation
 - Action Step #2. Continue to promote the Housing Rehabilitation Program to improve housing for low and moderate-income residents. Use the Inspection Department and Human Services Department to identify potential projects. Provide a brief summary describing the available assistance programs for home improvements and contacts for more information to all inspectors, care providers, and other governmental employees who work with low and moderate income residents on a regular basis. Responsible party - Planning Department/Housing Rehabilitation, Inspection Department, Health and Human Services
 - Action Step #3. Develop a program for regular inspections of rental properties (every 5 years +/-) to better assure code compliance. [NOTE: Assuming roughly 10,000 rental dwelling units in the City, this would require 8 units be inspected each working day of the year to complete a cycle in five years]. Fees could be charged to recover some or all of the costs (Possibly through a licensing program as mentioned in the Powell-Hood Park Hamilton

Neighborhood Plan). If fees are not charged, inspectors may have more flexibility to target buildings where code violations are suspected, thus reducing the total workload. Responsible party - City Council first, then Inspection

- Action Step #4. Provide efficient and timely enforcement of regulations related to property maintenance. This is covered in much greater detail under Goal Area #4, and does not require further discussion here. Responsible party - Inspection
 - Action Step #5. Re-zone more residential areas to single family and duplex to promote more owner occupied housing. This step is not intended to imply that tenants cannot feel pride and ownership in their neighborhood, but acknowledges that property owners have additional incentives to maintain and improve their neighborhood, and increase stability in a neighborhood. Responsible party - City Council, Planning Dept. & Neighborhood Groups.
6. Some cities have initiated "Clean-up Assistance Programs" that work in tandem with code enforcement efforts. Programs are created to assist residents in assuring that the trends of decay and blight are reduced. Programs that should be considered could include:
- Blue Ticket Program – right-of-way clean up project.
 - Adopt-a-Spot Program – Volunteer groups clean up and maintain a “spot” for a minimum of two years.
 - Blighted Structure Abatement Assistance – Service organizations volunteer the labor for removing blighted structures. Property could then be used for housing for first-time homebuyers, or low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. CDBG could cover the costs.
 - Refuse Disposal Assistance – Same as above but for debris.
 - Community Service Work Crew – Screened offenders are sentenced to pay for their offenses by working on projects to benefit the community such as clearing vacant lots and alleys.
 - Paint Up - Fix Up - Such as last years City/WHEDA effort.
 - Expand participation in the spring Neighbors Day effort.
7. The City will revisit the “Living Wage Ordinance” and work to create good jobs at good wages.

Actions Initiated/Completed:

1. Prepare bright stickers to provide to residents who pay for appliance removal, so if an appliance is set out, it is immediately apparent if the property owner/tenant has paid for disposal. Responsible party - Refuse & Recycling.
2. Prepare a one-page summary in clear, positively worded language, describing proper waste handling methods and options for disposal of various items. Could also include common code problems. Distribute through Recycling and Inspection to all properties where problems are noted. Responsible party - Public Works, Inspection and Refuse & Recycling.

3. Work with Inspection Dept. and Fire Dept. to provide disposal of junk and abandoned autos for people who cannot afford disposal fee. (20-30 vehicles/year).
Responsible party- Inspection.

Goal Area #2 Partners

Mayor's Office	Neighborhood Groups
Common Council	Hmong and Minority community
Department of Public Works	Churches
Refuse and Recycling Department	Institutions (such as the medical centers)
Attorney's Office	Boys and Girls Club
City Planning Department	School District and teachers (Hamilton School)
Police Department	Schools and Universities
Inspection Department	La Crosse County, including Human Services
Parks and Recreation Department	Courts
Fire Department	County Sheriff and District Attorney
Tenants	UW-Extension
Property Owners	WI Department of Corrections
Home Owners	News Media and others
Businesses	
Place of Grace	

GOAL AREA #3: PROVIDE POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR YOUTH

(Lead RENEW Partner: Boys and Girls Club of La Crosse, La Crosse County Health & Human Services,)

Goals:

1. Develop age-appropriate after-school and weekend recreational/educational/social activities for youth.
2. Develop more culturally specific activities and opportunities for South East Asian, African American, and Native American youth, and include Caucasian youth in this process.
3. Develop new activities involving youth from these neighborhoods which will encourage youths to take ownership in the City's neighborhoods.
4. Provide positive adult role models for youth in these neighborhoods.

Problem Statement: Community youth of all ages are congregated at the Hamilton School Boys and Girls Club; age groups need to be separated to other locations.

Schools report lack of culturally specific activities for youth in neighborhoods where there is a large population of minorities.

Other than sports activities and the Hamilton Boys and Girls Club, youth need to be a part of this endeavor. The youth in these neighborhoods need to have hands-on activities, such as community service projects.

There are problems in the City associated with drugs, single parent families, apathy, lack of quality employment and others.

Challenges: Available space, staff time, funding, lack of involvement and leadership role of minorities.

Solutions:

1. **Positive Alternatives for Youth** (Safe and Sound Goal #1).
 - The Boys and Girls Club & La Crosse Police Department will collaborate with Another Way - a unique Gang Diversion and Prevention Program. The program works closely with several community partners to reach potential and current gang members of the La Crosse community. Another Way has seen great success. Since 1996, 88% of participants have had no further contact with gangs and 80% have had no further criminal activity. New programming begins and ends depending upon the recruiting process. Special emphasis will be placed on recruitment efforts in the demonstration area.
 - The Boys and Girls Club & La Crosse Police Department will provide learning experiences through positive, readily available outdoor activities. These activities will enhance the existing partnership between the La Crosse Police Department's G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education And Training) program, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse NYSP (National Youth Sports Program), and Boys and Girls Club PLAY (Participating in the Lives of Area Youth) program. The activities will also involve a partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wardens and Park Rangers) and the UW-L Adventure Education Specialists. Activities will include bus trips to Perrot State Park to learn about nature, outdoor safety, and water safety, and have an opportunity for canoeing and hiking. These activities will take place during June, July, and August when the programs are in session.
 - The Boys and Girls Club and Police Department will support officer-led, family activities during the school year. These are family events designed to expose families to positive outdoor activities readily available in our region. These activities will involve a partnership with the La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department and the La Crosse School District. These activities will take place monthly throughout late winter and into spring.
 - The Police Department will initiate a family assistance and strengthening project called 'G.R.E.A.T. Families' through the auspices of its G.R.E.A.T. Midwest Regional Training Center. Curriculum and activities are based on current 'best practices' curricula as identified by the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, and will target families with children aged ten to fourteen. This will serve as the national model for other communities currently providing G.R.E.A.T. There will be four, two-hour

sessions conducted during February and March. Recruitment of families will come from the Demonstration Area.

2. Contact minority groups and universities and request minority staff or others to be neighborhood leaders in working with neighborhoods and schools to develop culturally-diverse activities for youth in this area.
3. Create community service projects such as sidewalk shoveling, yard raking, tree planting, and park clean-up projects.
4. Develop a mentoring program. Adopt-a-grandparent program with positive males and females. Invite Big Brothers/Big Sisters to focus on these neighborhoods. Invite university students to be mentors to youth. It only takes one person to connect with a child, resulting in a positive influence that could turn a child's life around.

Goal Area #3 Partners

Schools	La Crosse YMCA
Universities	Teachers
Boys and Girls Club	City Park & Recreation Department
School District of La Crosse	UW-La Crosse National Youth Sports
UW-Extension	Program (NYSP)
Neighborhood groups	G.R.E.A.T.
Area youth	Boys and Girls Club PLAY Program
Hmong and Minority Community	Wisconsin Department of Natural
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	Resources
Police Department	UW-La Crosse Adventure Education
County Human Services Department	Specialists

GOAL AREA #4: PROACTIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT

(Lead RENEW Partner: City Building and Zoning Department)

Goals:

1. Maximize compliance rate by reallocating resources and focusing on open storage, garbage and refuse removal and repair or removal of blighted property.
2. Establish a system for efficient, effective and immediate nuisance abatement through a cooperative effort with the Director of Public Works, City Attorney, Recycling Coordinator, Contract Waste hauler and Inspection Department.
3. Establish links with internal and external stakeholders to facilitate the inflow of information regarding problem sites.
4. Establish a system to provide information to neighborhood groups and concerned residents.

Problem Statement: The initial enforcement focus area has a high percentage of older housing stock. Typically, the City has been told that many owner-occupied households have limited resources available for home improvements. There is also an abundance of non-owner occupied rental units. It has been observed that there can often be a direct and readily observable correlation between poorly maintained properties and the absence of on-site owners.

Challenges:

Community perception of inability or unwillingness of government to perform. This may be creating a lack of confidence and trust that the City will have to overcome by consistently proving that governmental services are here and ready to work.

The nature of the violations are such that there is a high likelihood of recurrence, i.e., abandoned junk vehicles, kitchen appliances, water heaters, various pieces of furniture, general garbage strewn about the neighborhoods. Additionally, some rental structures will (if we permit them to) continue to deteriorate due to some investor's willful desire to maximize today's positive cash-flow and profit while avoiding, to the greatest extent possible, any expenditure of funds to maintain, clean or repair the property.

Solutions:

1. Action Steps to Maximize Compliance Rate:
 - Select, acquire, initialize, launch, monitor and modify as required an electronic maintenance enforcement complaint processing system
 - Monitor processes against benchmark goals to ensure effective and efficient maintenance enforcement operations
2. Action steps to establish an effective and efficient nuisance abatement team:
 - See Solutions Completed Below.
3. Work in concert with City Departments, Neighborhood groups and property owners to effect positive change.
4. Action Steps toward establishing a system to provide information to neighborhood groups and concerned residents:
 - Attend informational meetings with the Community to explain these action steps and to assure them that City Departments are working together to deliver services that will have a direct impact on improved quality of life in our neighborhoods (ongoing).
5. Create a Code Enforcement Team. Effective code enforcement and property maintenance is and will continue to be the top priority of our older neighborhoods. At present, public sentiment is that the City is not doing a good job. To improve efficiency, the City is currently in the process of developing a computer network as well as a GIS system. The code enforcement team would meet regularly to discuss neighborhood revitalization strategies and develop an integrated tracking system to

share information and eliminate duplication of services. A Code Enforcement Team could make this their first priority.

Actions Initiated/Completed:

1. Action Steps to Maximize Compliance Rate:
 - Reallocate Inspection Department resources by apportioning the city into seven Maintenance Code Enforcement Districts and deploy seven Inspectors, one in each district, to more proactively address the problem. (Began in November 2000).
 - Create a vision of where we are and where we want to be.
 - Define what it is that we are going to accomplish.
 - Provide training, coaching, tools, support and resources to get the job done.
 - Establish benchmark standards for compliance to existing code.
 - Establish seven Maintenance Inspection Districts.
 - Reallocate Inspection resources to staff new Maintenance Districts.

2. Action steps to establish an effective and efficient nuisance abatement team:
 - Streamline trash and debris removal process through cooperative effort with Board of Public Works (BPW), Recycling Coordinator, City Attorney, Street Department and Contract Waste Hauler.
 - Establish new “nuisance” Orders To Correct Conditions Of Premises for ease of use by Inspectors.
 - Establish the ability of Inspectors to find out owners of vehicles through access to DOT files via Police Dispatch Center (using VIN numbers and license plate numbers).
 - Establish the ability and authorization of Inspectors to write citations without prior or post authorization.
 - Establish a new procedure for notifying BPW that compliance has not been achieved and that the BPW should consider whether to have the nuisance abated and recommend to the Council to charge the cost of abatement against the property.
 - Establish a new procedure for the Street Department to respond to a BPW order to remove nuisances.
 - Establish a new system to identify when large appliances have had their pick up fee paid and are approved for pick up by the contract waste hauler (bright orange “Paid” stickers).

3. Action Steps toward establishing a system to provide information to neighborhood groups and concerned residents:
 - Establish new paper forms to fill out when taking telephone requests for services.
 - Publish e-mail addresses of Maintenance Inspectors along with a map of their geographical district boundaries on the Departmental page of the City’s Web Site.
 - Establish informational handouts depicting Maintenance District boundaries and Inspector contact information. Handouts are readily available at the Inspection Department counter or via FAX or via regular U.S. mail.

Goal Area #4 Partners

Mayor's Office	City Inspection Department
Common Council	Neighborhood Groups
City Department of Public Works	Property Owners
City Attorney	County Health Department
City Planning Department	State Department of Corrections
City Police Department	County Sheriff
City Fire Department	County Department of Human Services
City Treasurer	County District Attorney's Office
City Clerk	News Media
City Assessor	

GOAL AREA #5: TOUGH LAW ENFORCEMENT

(Lead RENEW Partner: City Police Department)

Goals:

1. Reduce and/or eliminate drug houses in the City through "Project Crackdown."
2. Strict enforcement of all laws and ordinances within RENEW Neighborhoods.
3. Increase all types of patrol and general police presence within RENEW Neighborhoods.
4. Work closely with other governmental agencies to improve quality of life for those living within La Crosse's neighborhoods.

Problem Statement: A few of the City's neighborhoods have a large percentage of the drug houses along with homes and properties in a deteriorated condition. People living within these neighborhoods have a perception that crimes within their area are more violent and their neighborhoods are less safe than in other parts of the City. Frustration with government entities is high.

Challenges:

Budgetary constraints can make it difficult to provide additional resources for RENEW neighborhoods.

Drug-bust cases are generally difficult to develop and take considerable time, which gives the appearance of little or no action.

Manpower availability is always a concern and can be tied directly to budgetary constraints.

The perception that a project such as this targets individuals by race or ethnicity.

Solutions:

1. **Tough Law Enforcement** (Safe and Sound Grant Program #3). The La Crosse Police Department will conduct pre, post, and ongoing surveys developed by the local Safe and Sound committee in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, measuring perceptions of people living/working within the demonstration area by using automated and door-to-door surveys. They will increase foot, bicycle, motorcycle, horse, and motorized patrol, plain clothes and uniformed officers to strictly enforce ordinance and law violations within the demonstration area. These patrols will be made at various times of the day. In addition to the patrol duties, the assigned officers will work closely with the Boys and Girls Club current and expanded programming in the schools within the demonstration area. The officers will also note squalor conditions as well as graffiti and take steps to notify appropriate City Departments to ensure expedient cleanup and removal. This initiative will enhance existing partnerships between the Boys and Girls Club, Police Department, many City of La Crosse Departments, and neighborhood groups.
2. Initiate Project Crackdown in a specific area and then expand to keep drug dealers on the move and out of La Crosse. The Police Department, working in conjunction with various agencies, residents, and enforcement personnel, gathers data on buildings suspected of being drug houses or of being used inappropriately. An inspection is then ordered if the evidence warrants. It is a complete property inspection with all code enforcement personnel from the various City departments present, the Fire Department, the Health Department, as well as the Police Department and the owner. Owners are then given a list of violations with a short time frame to bring the property into compliance. This approach can result in significant declines in drug house activity.

With the assistance of area residents, the La Crosse Police Department will support community based anti-drug efforts by:

- Developing and maintaining intelligence for tracking drug activity.
 - Identifying, arresting, and seeking prosecution of drug offenders, including street level users and sellers, as well as those involved in major trafficking and conspiracies.
 - Identifying, disrupting and, where appropriate, arresting individuals involved in illegal gang activity.
 - Using high visibility specialized patrol tactics to discourage and disrupt drug markets.
3. Involve the City Inspection and Fire Departments when code violations are evident or suspected.
 4. Increase foot patrols, bicycle patrols, and auto patrols in these neighborhoods.
 5. Permit the City Police Department to use the new neighborhood center at 6th and Farnam Streets as a place in which to write reports and conduct training and outreach to neighborhood residents.

6. The City began a Crime Free Multi-housing program several years ago. That effort was a first step in landlord and tenant education. The City needs to recommit itself to that effort as part of RENEW which will assist owners and managers in how to deal with and prevent illegal activity on rental property.
7. The WI Department of Corrections has assigned one specific Agent to supervise the probation or parole of all adult offenders residing in the Powell-Hood-Hamilton Neighborhood. A La Crosse City Police Officer has been assigned to work with and accompany the agent in her responsibilities. This partnership facilitates law enforcement as well as strict and constructive correctional supervision.

Goal Area #5 Partners

Courts
 District Attorney
 City Attorney
 Human Services
 Inspection Department

Neighborhood Groups
 WI Department of Corrections
 Property Owners
 Media

GOAL AREA #6: INCREASE LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
 (Lead RENEW Partner: Mayor's Office)

Goals:

1. Actively work with State and Federal elected officials to increase various aid formulas that increase the City's ability to cope with neighborhood problems.
2. Increase the awareness of Local, State and Federal elected officials and staff members of neighborhood problems.
3. Actively work with lenders and service organizations and foundations to identify financial resources.

Problem Statement: While the Local, State and Federal Governments have programs that promote the redevelopment of brownfields or the development of new business parks, tax credit and other programs for individual businesses, few programs are aimed at a coordinated approach to solving problems in neighborhoods. The neighborhood scale is the most logical level to deal with the myriad of complex social and physical problems, yet most programs only deal with the outside layers of the problems.

Challenges:

State and Federal budgetary constraints and spending priorities make it difficult to provide additional resources for a project such as Neighborhood RENEW.

The State-imposed Expenditure Restraint Program discourages new programs or the acceptance of grants aimed at these neighborhoods.

Federal HUD funds for the HOME program should not require a local match for City initiated programs, such as the Housing Replacement Program.

Coordinating local non-governmental resources.

Solutions:

1. Expand programs, such as the Police Officer or Teacher Next Door, to attract middle income homeowners to lower income neighborhoods.
2. Review HUD's Best Practices award winners for additional ideas for neighborhood revitalization.
3. The City should again consider the creation of a "grant writer" position, but rather than a citywide position, the position should specifically work on neighborhood funding efforts.
4. Organize a meeting of community partners to increase awareness, as well as various aid formulas, and to establish methods to increase financial resources aimed at addressing neighborhood problems.
5. Provide progress reports on the use of the recently established City Project RENEW Fund.
6. Continue to pursue renewal of the Safe and Sound Grant.

Goal Area #6 Partners

Mayor and Common Council
State and Federal Elected Officials
Agency Staff Members
Alliance of Cities
U.S. Conference of Mayors
League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Planning Department

Neighborhood Groups
Property Owners
Media
Lenders
La Crosse Community Foundation
Other Foundations

V. Assessment

The RENEW program will be subject to two separate kinds of assessment. The first and overall assessment done on an annual basis and the second evaluation of each of the separate components, conducted by individual departments or organizations involved.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

- A.** Identification by address and photo of homes or buildings in disrepair or unkempt. Provide pre and post activity photos to examine the effectiveness of various initiatives.

- B1.** A reverse 911 phone survey of 100 individual phone numbers requesting feedback on ten items of satisfaction regarding their neighborhood (survey to be developed by a University class on community assessment and conducted through the city reverse 911 phone system, to be completed by December 30th).

- B2.** Survey of utility workers in the target areas requesting them to identify homes that they believe are in disrepair or unkempt. (Survey to be distributed to utility workers in the following areas: road repair, phone, taxi operators, bus drivers, postal mail deliverers, trash collectors, city maintenance department, city zoning department, assessors office, parole agents, churches, businesses, community organizations, city police, water utility workers, inspection department, fire department, human services department, health department, school district, property owners association and others.) Survey to be designed in conjunction with the phone survey described above and completed by November 30th.

The phone survey and the survey of utility workers will be repeated and data collated by the University class in November 2001.

- C.** Training will be provided for utility workers, neighbors and others subject to the initial survey to inform them of the project RENEW and provide them information on various city and county officials that can be contacted regarding problems identified within the community. Individuals will be encouraged to make reports during the course of the year to the appropriate agencies.

Quarterly meetings of the Neighborhood RENEW participants will occur to discuss city services from a neighborhood perspective, and neighborhood plans would provide a venue to benchmark plan implementation and discuss potential programs or events to improve neighborhoods.

ORGANIZATION EVALUATION

A. City Police

1. Baseline information will include identification of suspected locations of illegal activity by address.
2. Criminal activity reports in the target areas for the year November 1999 - November 2000 will be compiled. (Use the Tribune's published blotter of reported calls as the database.) The data will be compared with similar data taken for the period November 2000 - October 2001.

B. City Public Works

1. Windshield Survey Results.
2. Report on complaint frequency.

C. Health Department

1. Identify lead contaminated homes and counsel families on correcting the problem.
2. Outreach program through screening programs.

D. Mayor's Office

1. Conduct neighborhood meetings.
2. Door to door discussions.

E. Neighborhood Community

1. Evaluation of "stricter" code enforcement by residents.
2. Evaluation of effectiveness of the program and recommendations.

F. Human Services Department

1. Report on the number of human service program participants by geographic area.

G. City Inspection Department

1. Report on the number of code violations issued.
2. Evaluation of maintenance zone method of code enforcement and effect of stricter code enforcement.