

Project/Program Profile

Name of Project/Program: Neighborhood & Community Beautification

Organization: Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)

Location of Project/Program: 3101 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90007

Year Project Completed/Program Began Operation: Since 2005

Funding Sources: Funding comes from a combination of fee-for-service contracts with local government and other customers.

Populations Served: Neighborhoods and industrial areas within the Vernon-Central neighborhood of South Los Angeles

Number of People Served: CRCD's South LA Beautification Team has removed over 6.1 million square feet of graffiti in 2009. The Bulky Item Pickup Program collects 24 tons of illegally-dumped bulky items per week from public alleys, sidewalks, residential streets, and business corridors, and delivers them to the City yard.

Number of Staff: 15

Total Cost of Development/Operation: \$500,000/year

Partners: Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jan Perry of District Nine, Los Angeles Board of Public Works Office of Community Beautification, Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles

Services Provided: Removes graffiti from requests made by businesses, residents, police, the City Council Office, and the City's 3-1-1 service. Collects illegally dumped bulky items from public alleys, sidewalks, residential streets, and business corridors. Provides full-service exterior maintenance, including high tech sweeping, scrubbing, steam-cleaning, and pressure-washing to remove grime from public sidewalks, of a 1.5 mile stretch of historic Central Avenue from Washington Boulevard to Vernon Avenue. Provides logistical coordination and clean-up for more than 25 major community events per year.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: Commercial District Improvements Program

(Italicized portions offer further explanation. If the standard is not fulfilled by the project, it is noted in the italicized explanation. Crossed-out portions are not applicable.)

Level 1: Program Feasibility Assessment

These basic criteria determine the feasibility of a commercial district improvement program. The focus is on the organizational and financial readiness of the program.

1. NEED

a. Community Need

i. The program serves a need in the local business community.

1. *Vernon-Central is renowned for its role in jazz history from the 1920's to 1950's, and is home to historic landmarks such as the Historic 28th Street YMCA and the Dunbar Hotel. However, Vernon-Central is deeply impacted by concentrated poverty, a 20.7% unemployment rate, and 55 gangs. These factors lead to physically deteriorated and unkempt streets.*
2. *The implementation plan for the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles' Council District Nine Corridors called for beautification work.*

ii. The program serves a need in the local residential community.

1. *There is a need for graffiti cleanup to help reduce tension and gang violence. Close to 6.1 million square feet of graffiti was removed in 2009, helping to reduce tension and violence between the target area's 55 gangs. The program receives more than 4,500 graffiti removal requests per year from residents, businesses, police, the City Council Office, and the City's 3-1-1 service.*
2. *There is a need to clear the trash that is illegally dumped in the area. In 2010, 1,570 tons of illegally dumped bulky items were picked up from residential and commercial areas and 15,213 bags of trash and debris were collected from sidewalks, streets, and alleys.*

b. Market Study/Needs Analysis

No market study was conducted, but the implementation plan for the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles' Council District Nine Corridors project area confirms the need for the program.

i. The study confirms the need for, and viability of the program.

1. *The implementation plan for the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles' Council District Nine Corridors project area confirms the need for beautification of the area.*

ii. The market study informs the organization about demographics of the area and barriers to entry.

c. Local Support

i. The beneficiaries of the program, such as businesses within the area, support the program.

1. *The neighborhoods and businesses greatly benefit from the services provided by CRCDC and support the program.*

ii. Neighbors and local community members support the program.

1. *Local community members support the program and utilize the services, calling in for graffiti removal and bulky item pick-up services.*
2. *CRCDC provides logistical coordination between organizations and clean-up for more than 25 major community events per year such as the annual*

Central Avenue Jazz Festival, the Central Avenue Farmer's Market, the Environmental Fair, All Peoples Christian Center's Health Fair, the L.A.U.R.A. event, and block club clean-ups.

- iii. The program is in alignment with local city, county, state and/or federal development and transportation goal(s).

2. ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

- a. The organization is willing and able to do the program.
- b. The program is in alignment with the mission of the organization.
 - i. *Founded in 2005, CRCDD's mission is to better sustain, coordinate, and improve local planning, development, and community services that address the needs of low-income residents and small businesses in South Los Angeles. The program helps improve the quality and appearance of the Vernon-Central neighborhood of South Los Angeles. The program also helps promote and sustain businesses in the neighborhood.*
- c. The Board of Directors embraces a CED strategy and/or embraces the program as a part of the CED strategy.
- d. The organization and/or its partners have a track record of participating in similar programs.
 - i. *The organization has a track record of working with small business. It assists small businesses on the historic jazz corridor of Central Avenue to promote economic growth and strengthen the Central Avenue Business Association.*
- e. The organization has the financial and operational capacity to undertake the proposed program.
 - i. The organization can support the additional debt (if any) created by the program.
 - 1. *There is no debt created by the program.*
 - ii. The organization has qualified staff that can undertake the program.
 - iii. The organization has access to reliable, qualified vendors and service providers.

3. FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

- a. Program cost
 - i. The program is affordable to the organization, and the projected cost is appropriate to the concept.
 - ii. The operator or staff providing the cost estimates is qualified and experienced with business improvement district programs.
- b. Funding sources
 - i. There are enough sources of funding for the uses.
 - 1. *Funding comes from a combination of fee-for-service contracts with local government and other customers.*
 - 2. *Funding sources are adequate to help maintain the programs.*
 - ii. The organization has endeavored to secure all available competitive and noncompetitive funding sources for which the program qualifies.
 - 1. *The scale of the program depends on the fee-for-service contracts.*
 - iii. The actual disbursement of each source is timely and in sync with the needs of the program.
 - iv. The organization is aware of the compliance implications of each source.
- c. Cash flow
 - i. ~~The program produces enough cash flow to support the proposed debt structure (if any).~~
 - 1. *There is no debt.*
 - ii. The program minimally pays for itself over time. It has a sustainable cash flow.

1. If the program is low-cost or free, it is subsidized enough to sustain the program.
 - a. *The program is subsidized through fee-for service contracts.*
2. The beneficiaries of the program, such as businesses within the area, contribute financially to the program.
 - a. *Some of the fee-for service contracts are with customers.*

Level 2: Practical Considerations

These criteria are essential for a successful, operating commercial district improvement program.

1. MARKET BARRIERS

- a. The organization understands why past programs have not worked and instead addresses prior issues in innovative and alternative ways.
 - i. *CRCD has used its experience to expand and innovate programs. Through the Neighborhood and Community Beautification program, CRCD has learned to target resources to produce results.*

2. DEVELOPMENT TEAM & PARTNERSHIPS

- a. The organization has assembled the best team for the program, including vendors, employees, trainers, translators, outreach coordinators, and management staff.
 - i. *CRCD employs highly experienced individuals, including a California-licensed painting contractor.*
- b. If the organization is lacking in any area (financial, experience), it has partnered with another entity to operate the program.
 - i. *To best serve the community, CRCD communicates often with the Los Angeles Police Department, the Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney, Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jan Perry of District Nine, Los Angeles Board of Public Works Office of Community Beautification, Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, and business, residents, and community organizations. CRCD and its community partners work together to address the linked issues of graffiti, crime, neighborhood appearance and the need for a more business-friendly environment. All parties came to a consensus on shared objectives to reduce graffiti and improve public safety in the Vernon-Central neighborhood. Members of the collaboration committed to combining their financial and human resources in a concentrated geographic area to achieve a strong impact.*
- c. The program is supported by public sector, private sector, and community partners.
- d. Through an open dialogue with the community, the organization has sought and incorporated community participation in the program.

3. SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- a. The area which is served by the program makes sense.
 - i. *The plan for the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles' project area, which encompasses Vernon-Central, describes the neighborhood's challenges as "deteriorated landscapes...stagnant or deteriorated property values, abnormally high numbers of vacant lots, a lack of necessary commercial facilities, residential overcrowding, and a high crime rate."*
- ~~b. The program is located near or adjacent to transit.~~
 - i. *The program does not require transit access.*

4. PROGRAM DESIGN & OPERATION

- a. The program is run in the appropriate language(s) for the businesses in the area.
- b. The program is culturally appropriate to the businesses in the area.

- c. The program is tailored to the specific geography of the businesses in the area.
 - i. *The Vernon-central neighborhood of South Los Angeles has rampant poverty, crime, and structural deterioration, so the program is tailored specifically to address these issues in the specific geography. CRCD and its partners have worked diligently to help create an environment that is conducive for business and commerce in the area.*

Level 3: From Feasible to Exemplary

These criteria elevate a commercial district improvement program to an exemplary one.

1. FUNDING & FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

- a. The program uses a funding program or funding source that is new and innovative.
 - i. *Rather than using grant sources that are not renewable, the program is funded by fee-for-service contracts.*
- b. Each funding source was heavily leveraged to gain further resources.
- c. Certain features of the program were adapted to capture funding, but the program was not completely changed in order to capture one particular funding source.
- d. There are multiple stakeholders providing funding and this mix of funding sources maximizes the feasibility of the program.
- e. The program exceeds minimum standards required by funding sources.
 - ~~i. There is deeper low and moderate income targeting than required by funding sources.~~
 - 1. *There is no income targeting. Rather the program targets Vernon-Central, a low-income neighborhood.*

2. FUTURE PROJECTS

- a. The program strengthens the position (financial, political, capacity, experience) of the organization.
 - i. *CRCD took advantage of the program's success and momentum to launch other community development initiatives and to open new funding doors—thereby turning initial resource constraints into important growth opportunities*
- b. Through the program, the reputation of the organization was enhanced. Issues that the staff faced were dealt with in a diplomatic manner, enabling future programs.
- c. The success of the program will enable future funding on other programs.
 - i. *The program resulted in new and expanded resources for CRCD. The Pfaffinger Foundation and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles both took note of the accomplishments of the Neighborhood and Community Beatification Team and its partners and provided grants to CRCD to help launch a workforce development program for at-risk youth.*
- d. The community is happy with the program and will participate in more/similar programs in the future.
- e. The community is more knowledgeable about commercial district improvements.
 - i. *The goodwill established by the program opened doors for CRCD to talk with merchants about other aspirations to revitalize the Central Avenue commercial corridor. A collaborative of non-profits, leading businesses and public agencies—including the Los Angeles Police Department's Newton Division—began working to organize the Central Avenue Business Association.*

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- a. The program has less environmental impact than traditional programs during operation.
- b. The program fulfills the triple bottom line.

- a. The program provides a service that is needed by the community but is currently lacking.
 - i. *CRCD partners chose to work in the area because it has the most need and lacks services, especially for young people. With more than fifty-five street gangs in the area, young people have few alternatives and are drawn into the gang lifestyle at an early age.*
 - b. The program alleviates existing conditions.
 - i. The program improves the security of the area.
 - 1. *By removing graffiti, CRCD prevents messages of violence between rival street gang. CRCD believes that there is a strong tie between graffiti removal and reduced gang violence.*
 - ii. The program improves the quality of street life.
 - 1. *The program has improved the quality of life and safety for residents in the Vernon-Central Neighborhood of South Los Angeles through the graffiti removal, street clean-ups, and business façade improvements.*
 - c. The program attracts customers and new businesses to the area.
 - d. The program helps retain existing businesses.
 - e. The program stimulates long-term job creation.
 - f. The program results in other positive economic impacts.
 - i. *Transitional and permanent jobs have been created for youth and adults, including ex-offenders.*
8. REPLICABLE/SCALABLE
- a. This program can be replicated in other communities, regions, and/or states.