

# Chapter 3: Approach and Assessment

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With assistance from the City of Eugene and the project Steering Committee, the JLA consultant team implemented a broad variety of assessment tools and techniques to develop the key findings and recommendations for this report. Interviews with city staff, neighborhood leaders, and the broader community helped to inform recommendations addressing Neighborhood Services' organizational structure, staff levels, and program efficiencies.

JLA worked closely with the Project Steering Committee to develop an in-depth approach to program assessment focused on input from three stakeholder groups: Neighborhood associations (neighborhood affiliated), city departments (internal), and the broader community (non-neighborhood affiliated).

This chapter is divided into discussion areas that focus on three topics:

- Project Steering Committee
- Approach and Assessment Tools
- Identified Strengths and Challenges

## **Project Steering Committee**

### **Role and Function**

The Neighborhood Services manager appointed a Steering Committee made up of equal representation of City of Eugene staff and neighborhood association leaders. The committee's charge was to provide guidance to the JLA consultant team on the assessment process. The Steering Committee met four times between May and August 2008, and assisted the project consultant team by:

- Identifying community members, neighborhoods and organizations for targeted outreach and interviews.
- Advising on public concerns and issues for individual neighborhoods, the City of Eugene and the broader community.
- Providing feedback on written summaries, interim reports and questionnaires to help coordinate the assessment process.
- Serving as liaisons to constituents and representing the community as a whole.

### **Membership**

The following affiliations and departments were represented on the Project Steering Committee:

- City of Eugene City Manager's Office
- Neighborhood Leadership Council (Co-Chair) and Laurel Hill Valley Citizens
- Jefferson Westside
- Crest Drive Citizens Association

- Harlow Neighbors Empowerment Committee
- City of Eugene Neighborhood Services Manager
- City of Eugene Neighborhood Services Planner
- City of Eugene Public Works Engineering

Please see Appendix A for a complete roster of Steering Committee members and affiliations.

## Approach and Assessment Tools

JLA implemented eight assessment tools:

- **Assessment Tool #1:** City of Eugene Neighborhood Tour
- **Assessment Tool #2:** Interviews
- **Assessment Tool #3:** Neighborhood Association Meetings and Events
- **Assessment Tool #4:** Community Online Survey
- **Assessment Tool #5:** Community Sidewalk Survey
- **Assessment Tool #6:** Targeted Neighborhood Outreach – Trainsong Neighborhood
- **Assessment Tool #7:** Website Assessments
- **Assessment Tool #8:** City Council Mailings

### Assessment Tool #1: City of Eugene Neighborhood Tour

JLA participated in a tour of the City of Eugene and neighborhood areas led by Neighborhood Services Manager Isaac Markehe, and Jefferson West Neighbors member, Rene Kane, on May 13, 2008. The tour included the following neighborhoods:

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Downtown Eugene                 | • River Road Community Organization  |
| • Jefferson/Westside Neighborhood | • Trainsong                          |
| • Whitaker Neighborhood           | • Active Bethel Citizens             |
| • Crest Drive Neighborhood        | • West Eugene Community Organization |
| • Amazon                          | • Churchill                          |
| • West University                 | • Far West Neighborhood              |
| • Cal Young                       | • Friendly Area Neighbors            |
| • Santa Clara                     | • Southeast Neighbors                |
| • Laurel Hill Valley Citizens     | • Fairmount Neighborhood             |
| • Harlow Neighborhood             |                                      |

**Observations** – During the tour, JLA recorded observations about the following neighborhood-specific topic areas:

- Neighborhood demographics and composition
- Current focus of neighborhood associations
- Geography/topography
- Housing types of commercial corridors

- Population and neighborhood association participation rates

## **Assessment Tool #2: Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with both internal and external stakeholders. Internal interviews focused on an assessment of Neighborhood Service's programs, structure, and coordination with other departments within the City. These internal interviews included conversations with City Department Directors and staff, Eugene's City Manager, and Neighborhood Service's staff. External interviews focused on input from neighborhood association members and neighborhood leaders, local businesses, nonprofits, and local agencies.

JLA conducted 32 interviews between May and September, 2008.

The majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone. Please see Appendix B for the interview questionnaires.

**Internal Assessment** – These interviews focused on an assessment of Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations:

- The effectiveness of Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations
- Tools/techniques that have and have not worked well for addressing issues, problems and opportunities
- Suggestions for improvement

JLA conducted interviews with fourteen representatives from multiple city departments:

- City Manager's Office
- Neighborhood Services
- Parks and Open Space
- Planning and Development
- Library, Recreation & Cultural Services
- Public Works
- Transportation Planning
- Police

**External Assessment** – JLA conducted external interviews with a variety of community members and business and nonprofit leaders. External interviews were divided into two categories: affiliated and unaffiliated with neighborhood associations.

**Affiliated** –

- Five Neighborhood Leadership Council (NLC) members
- Five Neighborhood Association leaders and general members

## **Unaffiliated –**

- One business association representative
- Four nonprofit organization representatives
- Three local agency representatives

**Observations** – During the course of the interviews, JLA recorded observations that identified the needs, challenges and the strengths that existed, including:

- Enhanced communication and collaboration amongst city departments is needed.
- A shared understanding of the role of neighborhood associations, the NLC and procedures and processes for community engagement are not consistent city-wide.
- Community organizing is desired by neighborhood associations, the community-at-large, local agencies and non-profits.
- Neighborhood Services staff, the location and accessibility of the office, neighborhood newsletters and the neighborhood matching grant are considered strengths.

## **Assessment Tool #3: Neighborhood Association Meetings and Events**

JLA attended three neighborhood association meetings and one neighborhood hosted picnic in June 2008. JLA participated as an observer, recording agenda items and discussion points to inform the team's understanding of community issues and neighborhood association operations and priorities. The Steering Committee identified the following neighborhood association meetings to attend.

- Crest Drive Citizen Association – General Meeting (June 17)
- Fairmount Neighbors – General Meeting (June 10)
- River Road Community Organization – Board Meeting (June 16)
- Jefferson Westside – Neighborhood Picnic Event (June 10)

The key agenda items were sustainability, increased community participation in neighborhood association events and meetings, development and infill standards, transportation and bike and pedestrian planning, upcoming mayoral elections, and public safety. One point of discussion was the collaborative process to address concerns raised with regard to the University of Oregon's proposed basketball arena.

**Observations** – Increasing community capacity and participation in neighborhood meetings remained a central theme of two of the three neighborhood meetings. Mixed perceptions regarding the city's role and support for community-based initiatives emerged as a key observation from these two meetings as well. One of the three meetings was well attended with a wide variety of topics and agenda items. This meeting was well facilitated and participation during the meeting was productive. A number of guest speakers were part of the agenda to provide information and answer questions.

## Assessment Tool #4: Community Online Survey

JLA conducted an online survey targeted to reach the broader Eugene community. Please refer to Appendix C for a summary of the Community Online Survey key findings. JLA launched the survey on July 25, 2008, and closed it on August 15, 2008.

The goals of the online survey were to:

- Identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration between community and business organizations, the City, Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations.
- Identify what Neighborhood Services functions and operations are most important to the broader community, businesses and non-profit organizations.
- Identify effective tools and techniques for communicating or involving community organizations and businesses in their neighborhood association.

### Online Survey Notice and Advertising

The Neighborhood Services manager assisted JLA in posting the online survey on the Neighborhood Services' website, as well as on the project website ([www.eugene-neighborhoods.org](http://www.eugene-neighborhoods.org)). Neighborhood Services also posted a display advertisement in the *Eugene Register Guard*, and sent announcements to:

- The Parks and Recreation E-newsletter distribution list (3,000)
- Neighborhood Association list-serve
- The City Council newsletter

**Observations** - A total of 199 people completed the survey between July 25 and August 15, 2008. Of the respondents, 97 percent reported that they lived in Eugene. The majority of respondents were able to identify their neighborhood association or community organization; although 57% reported that they were not actively involved in their neighborhood association. When asked what types of services and improvements the City of Eugene Neighborhood Services could provide to promote constructive neighborhood participation, respondents identified the following:

- **Provide more information about the roles, responsibilities and boundaries of neighborhood associations**– Many reported that they did not know where to look for information about their neighborhood association. Others mentioned that they did not understand the role or structure of their neighborhood association.
- **Support broader outreach** – Community members asked for increased financial support for outreach efforts and further investigation into alternative methods of outreach and communication. Suggestions included: Email lists, interactive community websites, one master calendar for the city including neighborhood events, flash flyers/posters, TV broadcasts and newspaper advertisements.
- **Provide childcare and family friendly neighborhood events** – Childcare at neighborhood meetings and city events was consistently mentioned throughout the survey. A large number of respondents recommended hosting social gatherings to meet neighbors, family-focused activities or volunteer events to improve neighborhood. Ideas

included block parties, neighborhood clean ups, park picnics and neighborhood garage sales.

- **Increase program's capacity to provide support neighborhoods** – Respondents suggested assigning city staff as liaisons to each of the neighborhood associations. Staff could also help to provide legal and planning related advice. Others suggested that Neighborhood Services improve its ability to respond to neighborhood requests by providing more information regarding policies/planning changes that directly affect neighborhoods. Others suggested that the city provide greater access (and user-friendly access) to neighborhood maps, neighborhood-level planning data and technical support.
- **Support evaluation and feedback** – Create opportunities for feedback and evaluation between the city and community members, especially after a problem and/or issues is addressed.

## **Assessment Tool #5: Community Sidewalk Survey**

JLA conducted a series of sidewalk surveys on July 9 and 11, 2008 at the following locations:

1. Market of Choice on Franklin Avenue - Fairmount Neighborhood
2. Downtown Eugene Library – Downtown Neighborhood
3. Goodwill - River Road Neighborhood
4. Safeway - Southeast Neighborhood
5. Sheldon branch Library – Cal Young Neighborhood
6. Bethel branch Library and Echo Hollow Pool – Active Bethel Citizens

Sidewalk surveys were conducted at a variety of locations throughout Eugene to illicit responses from a diversity of residents, including community members who may be less aware of city services.

These surveys were an important element of the external assessment process, helping to better understand community perceptions of, and involvement with, Neighborhood Services. Please refer to Appendix D for a summary of Sidewalk Survey responses.

The goals of the sidewalk survey were to identify:

- Opportunities for partnership and collaboration between community members, the City, Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations.
- Neighborhood Services functions/operations most important to the broader community.
- Effective tools and techniques for communicating or involving community members in their community organizations.

**Observations** - Sixty-nine community members responded to the sidewalk survey. More than three quarters of the respondents (79%) reported that they were not actively involved in their neighborhood association.

Respondents mentioned barriers to participation as well as elements that would encourage participation. Overall, the sixty-nine community residents surveyed cited the following key themes:

- **Lack of time** – Lack of time and competing evening activities/obligations were consistently mentioned as the main barriers to participation in weeknight, evening meetings.
- **Easily accessible information regarding meeting dates/topics** – Sidewalk survey respondents mentioned that accessible information regarding meeting dates and topics of discussion would help to motivate participation rates.
- **Greater discussion surrounding topics of interest**– Respondents indicated that they would be more likely to participate in their neighborhood associations if the group addressed topics and issues that were relevant to their needs. Topic areas of interest included neighborhood development issues, community wide events, bike/pedestrian issues, as well as parks and open spaces.

When asked what type of services and/or information they would like to receive from the City, respondents reported that they would be interested in receiving information about the following events and involvement opportunities:

- Children and family-friendly events
- Upcoming community events, including monthly neighborhood and city meetings, park events and recreational opportunities
- City Council agenda topics and meeting schedule
- Volunteer opportunities organized according to topics of interest

## **Assessment Tool #6: Targeted Neighborhood Outreach – Trainsong Neighborhood Association**

JLA interviewed seven residents by telephone September 10, 2008. Currently, none of these residents are active in their neighborhood association, which is currently a dormant association. When asked to describe the barriers to participation, most cited time, family commitments and work commutes. Two respondents did mention that a lack of neighborhood leadership and access to information discouraged participation.

**Observations** - In contrast to the online and sidewalk surveys, conversations with Trainsong residents indicated that their neighborhood association was not effective. They were overwhelmingly in support of increased assistance from the city to provide community organizing, leadership training and increased police presence. Interviewees ranked public safety and crime, parks and transportation as priorities for city services and resources.

## **Assessment Tool #7: Website Assessments**

The JLA consultant team conducted website reviews for the City of Eugene, Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations. The review was conducted from an external perspective of a resident unaffiliated with a neighborhood association.

**Observations** - JLA considered these website elements:

- **Accessibility and Layout** –Website links to popular search items (such as community events, upcoming meetings, and meeting materials) on the city website and neighborhood association homepages were fairly easy to locate. In general, layout and content differed greatly between the neighborhood association websites. Font size on the city’s website could be difficult to read for some users. In addition, the city’s homepage organization is set up according to direct people to departments, events, and information of interest which makes searching for topics according to issue, topic or programs difficult for new users or those interested in specific information. Layout differed greatly between the different neighborhood associations. Several websites were difficult to navigate due to the layout of text and the wording used in the navigational side bars.
- **Relevant meeting information** –Meeting information and community events were displayed prominently on the city’s website and the majority of neighborhood association home pages. Neighborhood association websites appeared to be up-to-date for the most part – although the consistency of postings/updates on several neighborhood association websites did appear to be impacted by a lack of interest or leadership/webmaster.
- **Maps/Graphics** – Many of the neighborhood association websites displayed innovative and interesting graphics. Charts, neighborhood polls, maps and newsletters were common features on many websites, helping to convey information about the organization through a variety of mediums. In some cases, use of graphics and maps created a more first time user friendly approach, and helped to cater more to the broader public.
- **Contact Information** – Contact information on the city’s website and the Neighborhood Service’s homepage was displayed prominently, however contact information on many neighborhood association websites was either buried within postings or not available. A City Directory with contact information and topics should be added to the city website for public use.

## **Assessment Tool #8: City Council Mailings**

The JLA team reviewed six packets mailed by the City of Eugene to neighborhood associations chairs in May, June and July 2008. The review was conducted as part of the assessment process to better understand the City of Eugene’s and Neighborhood Services’ current tools for outreach and communication with neighborhood associations and the community at large about city projects, programs, events and decision making processes. To review the complete evaluation, see Appendix E.

**Observations** – JLA made the following observations when reviewing the City Council mailings:

- Packets provide good contact information on reverse side of enclosed calendar. Facilitates networking between neighborhood association leaders.

- The Eugene Planning Commission serves as the City’s formal Community Involvement Committee. The information provided in the packets doesn’t identify who staffs and manages this committee. Could be an opportunity for streamlining community outreach by having Neighborhood Services perform that role. Question to consider: Does the Committee’s membership reflect expertise in community involvement? It may be worthwhile to establish a new group that serves in an advisory role to Neighborhood Services as well as the City’s formal Community Involvement Committee. This group should have broad stakeholder representation, including from the City, neighborhood associations, the community at-large, businesses and non-profits.
- Forecasts for the Council agenda make it easier for involved groups to stay abreast of upcoming issues and opportunities.
- Well written and depth of articles reflect well informed and articulate neighborhood association members. Leaders and writers appear to be well educated regarding city decision making processes. Neighborhood Services and other City staff have the option of including city notices or articles in neighborhood association newsletters and should take advantage of this existing tool.
- One of the packets included a one page “City of Eugene newsletter.” Overall, the layout, content, lack of contact information and narrow distribution appeared to represent a missed opportunity for the City to communicate and connect with the community at large and share information about city projects, programs, staffing and decisions.

## **Assessment: Strengths and Challenges of Neighborhood Services**

Input from the eight assessment tools identified a number of important strengths and challenges regarding City Council and Neighborhood Services. The recommendations outlined in Chapter 5 propose ways to maximize these recognized strengths and proactively address identified challenges. In some cases, it was a different perspective or need that led to different conclusions or recognition that the City wasn’t maximizing an opportunity or identified strength.

### **Organization and Physical Location**

#### **STRENGTH: UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF PLANNING**

A few neighborhood association members in interviews said they were pleased that Neighborhood Services had been moved from the Community Development Division to the Planning Division, within the Planning and Development Department last year. Specifically, they felt that most of the issues that concern neighborhood associations are related to land use and planning, and having the program under that umbrella improved access to relevant managers and information.

#### **STRENGTH: FRONT DOOR LOCATION**

The decision to relocate the Neighborhood Services Program office to the first floor of the Atrium Building was heralded as a positive move by both internal and external stakeholders. Both city staff and community members underscored its importance in making the office more visible and accessible. They observed that it provided an open environment for exchanging

information with Neighborhood Services staff and gave neighborhood association leaders access to resources, i.e. meeting space, computers and Internet access.

### **CHALLENGE: COMMUNITY PERCEPTION TOWARDS PLANNING**

A handful of stakeholders felt that having Neighborhood Services located within the Planning Department was beneficial, while the majority – including city staff and neighborhood association members – felt that being under the umbrella of planning limited the focus of Neighborhood Services staffs to planning, at the expense of other departments and issues at the city. Others expressed concern that it reinforced the public’s perception that Neighborhood Services was a planning department resource, rather than a “city” resource for the broader community to tap into.

Another issue mentioned related to both Neighborhood Services and other city staff was the general appearance that city staff championed the agendas of City Council, the Planning and Development Director or Planning Manager as opposed to the community’s interests or priorities.

## **Neighborhood Services Staff and Communication with City**

### **STRENGTH: RESOURCEFUL STAFF**

City staff and neighborhood association members identified Neighborhood Services’ manager, Isaac Markehe, and Neighborhood Planner Michael Kinnison, as strengths of the program. Specifically, they described the current staff as adaptable, disarming and approachable, and refreshingly easy to work with.

### **STRENGTH: NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTERS**

*“Getting information out to neighborhood leaders and prospective leaders about how the program works and how to access government is a valuable service.”*

Respondents in both the interviews and online survey, including a large number of people unaffiliated with neighborhood associations, identified the neighborhood association newsletters as an effective tool for communicating with neighborhood residents, city staff and other community organizations. Many noted that although they didn’t participate in neighborhood meetings, they did read the newsletters.

Representatives of community groups and local utilities and agencies working in Eugene mentioned that the newsletters were an effective communication vehicle to provide information to residents about their services, events and volunteer opportunities. In the online survey, residents highlighted the community calendars that are developed and distributed in some newsletters as exceptionally useful.

Neighborhood association members cited the printing, mailing and graphics support from Neighborhood Services staff to produce the newsletters as an invaluable resource. Currently, Neighborhood Services dedicates .45 FTE to provide technical support, and City Council

allocated \$145,663 in its annual budget to produce and print the newsletters (July 2008-June 2009).

**STRENGTH: ACCESSIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION WITH CITY COUNCIL AND CITY STAFF**

Across the board, neighborhood association leaders and representatives from business and community organizations and local agencies confirmed that they had adequate access to City Council and city staff. Conduits of communication mentioned by those affiliated with neighborhoods included, informal interaction with City staff and City Councilmembers, councilors participating in neighborhood association meetings, neighborhood association-sponsored candidate forums, and public comment period at the beginning of City Council meetings.

*“There is a huge potential to bring government to the local level through neighborhood associations.”*

A few neighborhood association members noted that communication and collaboration between neighborhood association members and city staff worked well when related to specific projects. This rang especially true when city staff was able or willing to attend neighborhood association meetings to report finding, decisions and respond directly to neighbors’ questions.

**CHALLENGE: LACK OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION RELATED TO COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Interviews with City staff suggested that there was a gap in coordination related to public participation practices and process, including a lack of a shared understanding with regard to the role of neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Services and the NLC.

**CHALLENGE: MISSING FEEDBACK LOOP**

Representatives from community organizations and neighborhood associations expressed concern regarding the City’s lack of a consistent, recognized feedback loop to communicate how community input was reviewed and incorporated into city decisions and projects. Stakeholders identified this as a challenge for both city council and city department staff. One respondent suggested that the problem could be addressed by requiring decision makers to set timelines or deadlines to make it easier for community members to monitor the public process. Others suggested that city staff be required to attend neighborhood meetings to follow up with groups and respond to residents’ questions about the city’s decision or project. Other general comments included slow response time and difficulties in getting “consistent and straight” answers from city department staff.

**CHALLENGE: NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS/COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**

Raised during stakeholder interviews, the lack of knowledge or information about the demographics of individual neighborhoods and residents presented a lost outreach opportunity and challenge. Information relating to residents’ age, income 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.

A common theme noted by the online survey, targeted interviews and sidewalk respondents was the lack of knowledge and awareness about neighborhood associations and their function. This presents the notion that methods of outreach and communication should be broader in order to reach a variety of audiences.

Another common theme noted during the interviews was the concern about the lack of participation in neighborhoods. Participation seems to vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, however, without a method of measuring who is participating; all neighborhood associations lose credibility as effective community outreach tools.

### **CHALLENGE: CITY / NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES WEBSITE**

The majority of survey respondents, including those currently unaffiliated with neighborhood associations, confirmed that they prefer to communicate with neighborhood associations via email and a website. With this in mind, making websites more user-friendly could significantly increase communication with residents, community organizations and business groups interested in participating in neighborhood activities.

## **Neighborhood Services Programs and Services**

### **STRENGTH: NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM**

This was the program most often mentioned by neighborhood association members, and representatives from community organizations and local utilities and agencies as a positive benefit of Neighborhood Services. In particular, many stakeholders were thankful that the City funded the program and provided excellent staff (Michael Kinnison) to promote and facilitate the program. For the 2009 grant cycle, City Council allocated \$50,000. The program was established in 2000 by City Council. To date, over \$350,000 has been provided to 69 projects involving 19 of the 21 city-recognized neighborhoods.

*“Neighborhood Grant Program is a great asset.”*

In terms of broadening community involvement, interviews with local non profits emphasized that this program effectively brought neighborhood associations and community organizations together for a common cause. This same theme was repeated as a community need by neighborhood leaders, city staff and representatives from local agencies and non profits.

### **STRENGTH: NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEER EVENTS AND TOURS**

In the past, neighborhood volunteer events and tours have been opportunities for neighborhood associations to partner with the city, local businesses and community groups. These events have in turn sparked continued communication and information sharing between stakeholder groups. Examples provided by the El Centro Latino Americano representative include a park

“Effective because it gives people an opportunity to see what is going on with other neighborhoods”

clean up event in Whiteaker neighborhood, a coalition to fight substance abuse and crime, and a partnership with the neighborhood association to request increased police security for a specific neighborhood area. The representative from Food for Lane County highlighted two events hosted by the Far West Neighborhood: neighborhood bike tour and public art programs.

This identified strength underscores the findings from the online survey where respondents not involved in neighborhood associations admitted that they would be more inclined to participate in community volunteer activities or social family friendly events than to attend a neighborhood association meeting. In addition, many of the neighborhood leaders noted that while attendance at meetings is sparse, turnout for community picnics and volunteer clean ups are typically high.

This is an intriguing dichotomy where community organizations and local agencies are eager to tap into neighborhood volunteers and provide venues for information exchange. In many cases, these stakeholder groups expressed willingness to sponsor events and/or organize volunteer programs. Neighborhood association leaders are eager to find inexpensive and less time-consuming ways to involve more residents in making their communities more livable.

#### **CHALLENGE: LACK OF BROAD PARTICIPATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS**

Respondents from the online and sidewalk surveys repeatedly confirmed that the most common reason for not getting involved with their neighborhood association was due to the lack of time. Second most common reason was because residents felt that neighborhood association agenda topics didn't interest or concern them. Many respondents suggested that they might be interested in participating if neighborhood association leadership focused on broader themes of livability, physical volunteer opportunities and community building events (social, family friendly) versus “anti-campaigns” and defensive positions against the city or other organizations.

A number of online survey respondents and community stakeholders expressed concern about the public perception that neighborhood association membership was “too elite, same faces, small vocal groups.” Specific comments from the online survey described neighborhood association meetings as unwelcoming to new residents or new faces.

*“There is no discipline or requirements for neighborhood associations. No criteria for taking a position on an issue. This allows people to use neighborhood associations as their own political platform. This has caused city council to view neighborhoods as non-representative of their communities. Stronger governance would give credibility to neighborhoods.”*

#### **CHALLENGE: LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION**

The lack of communication and collaboration between neighborhood associations and community and business groups was mentioned numerous times by representatives from these stakeholder groups. This need is underscored by the examples provided by these same people highlighting the numerous benefits that have resulted from previous collaborations.

In interviews with nonprofits and neighborhood leaders there was an interest in increasing collaboration and communication, but also a desire to build on and expand successful collaboration efforts that were more historically centered around issues and problems such as neighborhood crime. Neighborhood leaders and nonprofits cited several missed opportunities for partnership surrounding volunteer events.

### **CHALLENGE: DISPARITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS**

A challenge mentioned in some of the interviews is the disparity between the 19 neighborhoods related to community involvement, governance, leadership and public discourse. This may be due to lack of providing community organizing and leadership training for neighborhood residents in inactive neighborhoods.

A related issue is the civil inequities with railroad, transient neighbors, high turnover at school and low income residents in Trainsong and River Road neighborhoods. This challenge raises the issue of environmental justice, and how the city would like to address this challenge and obvious need in these troubled areas.

## **Neighborhood Leadership Council (NLC)**

### **STRENGTHS: EFFECTIVE FORUM FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING**

A number of neighborhood association members who are also members of the NLC expressed support for the Council work. Specifically, they stated that it provided a forum for elevating issues for city government and sharing information about projects that impact the broader community. The representative from EWEB agreed that the NLC was a “good venue” for local agencies to discuss upcoming projects and programs with neighborhood leaders.

### **CHALLENGE: UNCLEAR ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY**

Several stakeholders interviewed were either concerned or unclear about the NLC’s role and responsibilities as it relates to the City and other community residents and stakeholder groups. Specific issues identified during the assessment process were:

*Formalizing the role of the NLC could be valuable. They appear to have influence, but it doesn’t appear to be very transparent”*

- Lack of transparency regarding NLC’s decision making process
- Difficulty in getting on the NLC’s agenda
- Lack of a feedback loop to share information with the neighborhood association general membership or the broader community
- NLC’s decision process is “frustratingly” slow and indecisive
- City departments do not appear to be responsive to NLC’s needs
- Lack of new membership and new faces at the table
- NLC members may not necessarily represent the views of their respective neighborhoods or community

Note that many of these issues correspond with similar challenges for appointed or elected bodies, such as city councils and planning commissions.