

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Accomplishments in Fresno, CA

“The Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative is making a real impact as Fresno moves forward on our economic development and community revitalization vision. The SC2 team has been a terrific partner in contributing to the development of ‘ground-up’ solutions tailored to our needs, refining lasting partnerships with key local and regional stakeholders, and working to remove roadblocks accompanying federal programs that directly affect our city.”

- Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin

The Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative (SC2) supports President Obama’s agenda to make historic investments to build ladders of opportunity for those working hard to make it to the middle class and to partner with communities that were hardest-hit by the recent recession. Under SC2 communities including **Fresno, CA** receive intensive technical assistance from federal inter-agency Community Solutions teams that work alongside the mayor in City Hall to support the community’s vision for economic development.

SC2 is working with **Fresno** to increase coordination around comprehensive city and regional planning and enhance the City’s capacity to address its priorities of downtown revitalization, economic development and innovation, increased infill development, business development, neighborhood revitalization, and sustainable communities. Key SC2 accomplishments in **Fresno** include:

- Supporting the city's goal to **reconnect an 18-square-block street grid downtown near the proposed site of the high-speed rail station** and the Fulton Pedestrian Mall—Fresno's historical Main Street. SC2 Department of Transportation team members delivered technical assistance that helped the city improve the siting of a future bus rapid transit (BRT) line, which as a result will better connect planned retail and mixed use developments with transit options for commuters and residents, and ultimately generate additional economic activity downtown.
- Fresno was selected for the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge, which provides the expertise of IBM employees on a pro bono basis. SC2 **worked in partnership with USDA and the Department of Energy to provide technical assistance** in the development of the IBM Team’s work plan. As a result of the efforts, an international team of six IBM Smarter Cities Challenge fellows has recommended solutions to key economic development issues in Fresno, many of which involve the growth of agriculture technology.
- The SC2 team including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA) is **helping to strengthen connections to the regional economy in the San Joaquin Valley**. The City received a \$95,000 EDA technical assistance grant to support regional connections by studying opportunities to expand Fresno’s value-added food sector by developing an existing industrial area into a food processing cluster to generate higher paying jobs. The grant is also fostering high-tech innovation in both agriculture production and the production of technologies to support the agriculture economy through extension of broadband.

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Accomplishments in Fresno, CA

- SC2 worked with the City of Fresno, the Downtown Business Improvement District, and local economic development organizations to **target downtown businesses including those in strategic sectors like food processing**. The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) *e200 Emerging Leaders Initiative* was brought to Fresno. SBA paid tuition expenses for approximately 17 promising, local, small businesses to take a nationally acclaimed executive style "mini-MBA" program to spur business growth and development.
- SC2 worked in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Energy (DOE), the Mayor, Fresno State University, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service Laboratory, and several other partners to organize an **inaugural "Tech Showcase" at Fresno City Hall to showcase research** from DOE's Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and USDA's Agricultural Research Laboratories that have an agriculture and wireless broadband application with potential for commercialization. This effort benefited investors and private sector interested in these technologies.
- The Urban and Regional Policy Program of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and Mayor Ashley Swearengin launched the first SC2 Boot Camp in Fresno, California. This two-day workshop **promoted several of the city's economic development initiatives, and explored ways to build civic capacity, engage and connect stakeholders, and to encourage innovative thinking around community revitalization** strategies.
- SC2 leveraged Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) resources to enter into two technical assistance contracts to **strengthen the local capacity of homeless housing and service providers**. In conjunction with the contracts, HHS completed a comprehensive assessment of the Fresno area homeless housing and services systems, which laid the foundation for additional interagency coordination and resources with Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- EPA funded and managed a technical assistance contract to support the City's implementation strategies for its General Plan Update – particularly strategies to finance and implement infrastructure and services needed to support increased **infill development**. The contract supported state and national experts who convened in Fresno to advise the city on innovative strategies for implementing infill development. The first report will provide concrete recommendations to enable the City to implement its new General Plan. A second report will use Fresno as a case study to extrapolate infill development strategies for economically distressed cities nationally.