

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Accomplishments in Memphis, TN

“The honor of being selected for SC2 has brought Memphis into the center of the national conversation about cities – helping us to find solutions for long-standing problems, bringing our team a burst of energy and expertise, and cutting through red tape to improve our relationship with the federal government.”

- Memphis Mayor A C Wharton

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 **Memphis, TN** have received 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 revitalization.

SC2 is working with Memphis to support four priorities: creating safe and vibrant neighborhoods, investing in people, growing prosperity and opportunity for all, and advancing a culture of excellence in government. Key SC2 accomplishments include:

- **Addressing small business funding needs in the community** through the establishment of the Economic Growth and Development Engine (EDGE). EDGE was developed by the City and Shelby County with technical assistance from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and its associated entities are **capitalized at \$16 million**. These entities include funding to finance smaller loans and another fund to meet business needs that exceed \$100,000.
- SC2 has worked with the City and Shelby County to **align the efforts of the U.S. Attorney General’s *Defending Childhood Initiative*, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, and local law enforcement initiatives**. The alignment has enabled the city and county to better leverage resources and to work toward creating a cohesive message that will improve the overall impact of the Initiative’s efforts to reduce juvenile victimization and crime in Memphis.
- **Worked with the City and the General Services Administration (GSA) to reissue a bid to procure space for a new court building downtown** as part of the Mayor’s downtown revitalization vision. Working collectively with the City and the Downtown Memphis Commission to procure data from U.S. General Services Administration, the SC2 team helped the City identify upcoming expiring leases for government buildings in the downtown area.
- **SC2 supported and worked in partnership with local non-profit Community LIFT to launch a new U.S. Treasury certified Community Development Financial Institution – River City Capital Investment Corp.** The U.S. Department of the Treasury - Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund awarded River City Capital with a nearly \$100,000 technical assistance grant to spur small business lending in three targeted neighborhoods. During the summer of 2013, River City Capital made its first loan to a local small business.
- **Helped catalyze partnerships and raise awareness of the need for capital investments in the greater Memphis area, by partnering with the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis - Memphis Branch and the Delta Regional Authority.** SC2 hosted a **regional access to capital symposium** on July 24, 2013, that brought together local, regional and national banks as well as philanthropies interested in working with CDFIs to discuss regional capital needs to spur

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economic development. The gathering was a follow-up to workshops held in Memphis during SC2's first year led by the U.S. Treasury's CDFI Fund.

- Supported the development of the Mayor's 25-block neighborhood revitalization strategy to reduce blight and improve public safety, making **the City more competitive to receive federal resources and resulting in the Frayser and Binghamton neighborhoods receiving a \$225,000 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Building Neighborhood Capacity Program**. The program is designed to galvanize economic development in low-income neighborhoods and the grant will focus on revitalizing those neighborhoods and improving education, employment, safety, housing and other focus areas.
- SC2 enabled the city to **revitalize its riverfront as a key anchor and catalyst for economic development** through the purchase of the American Queen Riverboat. SC2 worked with other public officials and key stakeholders to solve a complicated financing challenge that threatened completion of the deal. The purchase of the American Queen Riverboat represents an important strategic investment in the City's Riverfront, and compliments the City's investment in the new Beale Street Landing riverboat docking facility.
- Worked in partnership with Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to provide technical assistance to help the City utilize the AmeriCorps VISTA program. The City applied for and was awarded nine AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, who will facilitate volunteerism, service, and positive change. **AmeriCorps VISTA members will coordinate youth anti-violence activities, work with the City's Office of Youth Services, link the City's philanthropic engagement to poverty reduction efforts, and improve youth literacy as a strategy to combat youth gun violence**. VISTAs are expected to arrive in Memphis and begin work during the spring of 2014.
- SC2 worked with USDA to help troubleshoot permitting for The Green Machine (TGM), Memphis' **first mobile food market serving elderly and low-income populations**. TGM was launched in summer 2013.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and SC2 worked intensively with the City after it was awarded \$60,000 in EPA technical assistance, which **funded a Memphis-specific feasibility study of the innovative financing mechanism Pay for Success (PFS)**. The study was completed following nine months of intensive interviews and research with local stakeholders, and identified blight and juvenile justice as two promising issues for PFS.
- SC2 has **linked and aligned several federal initiatives within Memphis to help improve public safety**. Through SC2, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) connected with the Memphis Police Department, and the two now share crime data and work actively with the owners of HUD-subsidized apartments to make security upgrades. In addition, SC2 has connected HUD with ongoing efforts to better coordinate several DOJ-funded youth anti-violence initiatives.
- SC2 worked closely with EPA to **leverage \$85,000 in research funding** to examine how the movement of goods along the Mississippi River and inland ports communities are affected by fluctuating river levels. This research will support environmental, economic, and public health research in the greater Memphis region and will help inform local communities about how changes in the Mississippi River flow impact the shipping and logistics industry, air quality, and human health.