

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Accomplishments in New Orleans, LA

"SC2 is not a new program—it's a new way. The frustration for all cities is that government needs to work better, whatever our party. SC2 has helped to break down stovepipes between federal agencies."

- *New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu*

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 **New Orleans, LA**, have received intensive technical assistance from federal inter-agency teams that work alongside the mayor in City Hall to support the community's vision for economic development.

SC2 has worked with New Orleans to increase coordination around comprehensive city and regional planning, and enhance the City's capacity to address its priorities of housing, economic and workforce development, health and human services, homelessness, and transportation. Key SC2 accomplishments **in New Orleans** include:

- **Helped more than 500 residents become first-time homeowners** by accelerating the launch of a **\$52 million homebuyer assistance and neighborhood redevelopment initiative**. This assistance reduced a significant amount of red tape and helped get the funding out into the community.
- SC2 worked in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD) and a variety of state and local partners, to lead the development of the city's behavioral health strategic framework. The framework outlines a path forward to **address mental health and substance use issues in the community**. For example, the strategies presented in the plan have helped community leaders to establish a Behavioral Health Interagency Council that will help to increase communication among service providers to better meet the needs of community members. This collaborative effort to improve system-wide service delivery has helped create a 25% reduction in emergency room patients awaiting mental health care.
- SC2 also helped **prevent substantial reductions in health care service delivery** by extending the timeframe for local clinics to submit claims for reimbursement under the Medicaid Waiver program. This effort kept funding flowing to healthcare clinics, prevented service reductions, closings, and layoffs, and enabled healthcare providers to continue serving the community. The SC2 team also collaborated with healthcare providers and the state to improve payment methodologies under the Medicaid Waiver program, which strengthened the network of healthcare centers and their ability to serve the community.
- **Unlocked \$4 million in roadway enhancement and construction jobs** by helping the City identify and utilize an innovative, new pilot program that has made it easier to combine U.S. Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding for a priority infrastructure and economic development project. New Orleans was the first city in the nation to use this flexibility, which can be employed in many other communities across the country.

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- Provided extensive technical assistance through DOT that led to **the Loyola Avenue-Union Passenger Terminal Streetcar Line opening after years of development delays**. With \$45 million invested through DOT's TIGER (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) program, SC2 support helped ensure that the streetcar line expansion was completed in time for use during the 2013 Super Bowl. Private partnerships have contributed the majority of nearly \$2.7 billion to build and renovate properties near the streetcar corridor, including hotels, offices and sports facilities damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.
- Identified a rarely invoked hardship policy that enabled the pairing of federal and local resources to **remove a rental assistance barrier for homeless individuals**. By using this policy, the City helped **nearly 70 homeless individuals find housing** – individuals who would otherwise have failed to meet minimum rent requirements.
- SC2 also supported the efforts of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana and HHS SAMHSA, which **worked with local leaders and community members to help develop a regional framework to address substance abuse** in the region and identify gaps in services. The needs assessment serves as the foundation of a multi-part plan to develop the larger substance abuse strategy.