

**Application for Case Study Presentations
Transforming Local Government Conference**

**Conference Theme: "Creating Sustainable Futures: Global Issues/Local Solutions"
Greenville, SC: June 4-6, 2008**

Presentation Category:

Environment

Economy

X Social Equity and Community

Planning, Urban Design, Infrastructure

Organization and Finance

Title of Presentation: All Are Welcome – Greenville, SC’s Housing Strategy
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Synopsis of Project:

This case study will discuss the development of a housing strategy for the City of Greenville, SC. During the 20-year period from 1970-1990, the City of Greenville lost population. Constrained by some of the nation's most restrictive annexation laws, South Carolina cities are unable to grow to their natural urban boundaries. Also, Greenville City, located within a growing region along the busy I-85 Corridor between Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA, is ringed with amenity-rich subdivisions. The combination of forces had led to deterioration of many Greenville neighborhoods. By the mid-1990s, a revitalized central business district had begun exciting developer interest in inner-city housing. Many of the projects, however, were condominiums designed to appeal to upper-income, empty-nest households. The Greenville City Council was concerned that a focus on such developments, while helpful to the City's tax base, could erode the character of the Greenville community. City Council commissioned the City staff to develop a housing strategy that would address the need to grow Greenville's population while providing quality housing opportunities for all income levels.

Components of The Presentation

Innovation/Creativity

The City staff coordinated a series of meeting with local residential and commercial developers to solicit ideas on increasing residential development within the City. The staff also conducted a thorough analysis of Census and other information to identify emerging trends and issues for additional research. The staff also reviewed existing planning documents to identify recommendations yet to be implemented.

The planning process was an opportunity for all City departments to work together toward a common goal. Greenville's housing strategy provides a holistic viewpoint of neighborhood health, addressing the quality of housing as well as the quality of the infrastructure upon which the housing depends and the quality of services that neighborhoods receive. The planning process revealed that a housing strategy must include more than just housing. It was really about improving the quality of life in order to make Greenville the location of choice among individuals, couples and families seeking a quality environment to live, work, learn and play.

Quality Management

The housing strategy resulted from an inclusive planning process that involved every department of the City. Community participation was also solicited to ensure that recommendations being made incorporated the views of our citizens.

Value Proposition

The housing strategy documented that in order to have a diverse community, residential development was required to meet a range of incomes, housing composition and price points.

Residents, developers and other concerned citizens were able to provide input and comments on the plan.

The City's budget planning reflects the recommendations made in the housing strategy. For example, residential and commercial development is supported by new and improved parks and improved infrastructure.

Building Organizational Capacity

The housing strategy demonstrated that organizational barriers can be defeated through the focused inclusion of diverse City functions. The strategy also identified barriers to residential and commercial development contained in land development and zoning ordinances and regulations. Developing new and creative funding options have provided more resources for implementation of recommendations. More public/private partnerships are being developed. The housing strategy also provided a systematic framework for incrementally reviewing and addressing the barriers with well-founded policy recommendations.

City staff members involved in creating the housing strategy were given considerable autonomy to develop and present recommendations. The planning process included a study of best practices from other cities, analysis of Census and other data and community input.

Management Philosophy and Culture

Adopting best practices and avoiding wheel reinvention was accomplished with a thorough study of existing plans and strategies successfully implemented in other communities.

Integrated Processes and Reengineering with the Use of Technology

The planning process made extensive use of analysis capabilities inherent in the City's geographic information system (ESRI software). By incorporating permitting and Census data into the system and using spatial data analysis, the team was able to make well-founded and supportable recommendations. Development of the housing strategy was done entirely by the Greenville City staff.

Applicable Results and Real World Advice

The housing strategy established benchmarks against which progress can be measured. An annual update on accomplishments is presented to City Council. City Council incorporates data from the housing strategy report into their strategic planning. During the period from 2003 to 2006, 447 single-family and multi-family housing units were added to Greenville's housing stock. Of these, approximately 25% were designed to appeal to low- to moderate-income families.

Lessons learned include:

1. City functions are inter-related and cross-functional teams are a valuable method of building common purpose within a diverse organization. If good department-to-

department cooperation is encouraged in routine circumstances, seamless reactions to occasional crises can be facilitated.

2. Cities should draw upon the considerable resources within their organizations, as opposed to delegating difficult tasks to consultants. Persons in departments that are seemingly unrelated to the task at hand can bring considerable value to discussions by providing a fresh perspective on problems and issues.
3. Citizen participation is vital, not only as a means of gathering data, but also in building support for staff-proposed initiatives.
4. An implementation strategy must have measurable, achievable and understandable goals. Consistent reporting to elected officials on progress builds staff credibility and leads to increased support for staff-proposed initiatives.
5. To be effective, there must be a way to operationalize strategies, such as by linking the strategy to a budget approved by the City Council.