# Neighborhood Engagement Program: Empowering Residents and Building Community

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## Rancho Cordova’s Success Strategies
- **Funding** – city micro grants ($500) for events
- Keep council invested with presentations and invites to community events
- Partner with schools and businesses
- Provide food at meetings!
- **Asset Based Community Development** – build on what a neighborhood already has

## Rancho Cordova’s Favorite Projects
- Community art and murals
- National Night Out events and block parties
- Tree planting event
- Little lending library
- Holidays: “Trunk or Treating” / Christmas parade
- Community Leadership Institute

## Four Critical Steps for Engagement
1. **Convene** – City facilitates and activates neighbors and does not drive implementation
2. **Create** – Neighbors initiate and implement
3. **Identify** – Neighbors identify project leaders
4. **Support** – City and institutions (schools, non-profits) support resident-determined goals

## Continue the discussion in your community!
- How can you identify resident leaders?
- How can you move beyond informing residents to value-added engagement?
- How do you empower residents to create their own strong neighborhoods?
- How do your residents build social capital?
What was the most difficult part of pulling together the neighborhood engagement plan and how did you overcome it?
- It is continuously being developed – always learning and improving for next time. The most difficult is the initial outreach to invite people into the group for the first time. Once they’re in a room, the residents’ passion will keep people interested and motivated. Sometimes the very first meeting has 65 people, and sometimes there’s just 3!

What is the size of your work team?
- From 2012 through November 2017, it was just one person. In November, one additional staff was hired. As they continue to show benefit to the council and manager, it should continue to grow!

What are your plans to increase the scope in the community?
- In recent council meeting, council expressed interest in growth. This is a slow and steady process. The amount of neighborhoods possible with the level of staffing the have now is defined in their strategic plan.

For the neighborhoods you have engaged with, how do you keep those residents motivated?
- A lot of team building, typically at the beginning of the meetings. You have to constantly keep a positive relationship, know everyone who attends meetings, make residents feel like they are making a difference. Remind team members to encourage new members to share their ideas, and feel included and needed.

How are the micro grants being funded?
- When the program first started it was just using the general fund, offering $500 increments up to a cap of $10,000. Recently the city passed a tax measure to fund community enhancement funds which can now be used for the micro grants.

What is the best way to initiate contact?
- It has truly been trial and error. Going through all of the elementary schools, building relationships with principals to explain benefits has been most efficient, especially since schools can send flyers and invitations home with kids. Additionally they utilized the NextDoor app and do door-to-door flyer distribution. 10 or 15 people is a really good number to start with, so that is an ideal goal.

What are the overall benefits you’ve seen in Rancho Cordova?
- At this point, it is hard to completely connect the reduction in crime (approximately 32%) to this program. The most visible impact has been improved relationships between the residents and the city. Previously, some of the residents didn’t even know they were technically in Rancho Cordova. They have started doing baseline surveys so they can measure progress over the next year.