

# Community Engagement – Honor: City of Lakewood Sustainable Neighborhood Program



The Sustainable Neighborhoods Program (SN) gives residents the opportunity to become active partners in making Lakewood a vibrant and sustainable community. Developed through the City's Neighborhood Planning section as an implementation of Lakewood's Comprehensive Plan, the program focuses on five goal areas: energy, air, water, land, and people. Within these goal areas, residents in participating neighborhoods select the initiatives and projects that they would like to implement, allowing each neighborhood to address the unique challenges and leverage the opportunities specific to their area of Lakewood.

The SN program is a certification program. Depending on the number of credits earned in a given year, neighborhoods may receive designation as a "Participating Sustainable Neighborhood" or an "Outstanding

Sustainable Neighborhood” from the City. Neighborhoods receiving “Outstanding Sustainable Neighborhood” designation receive City signage and other recognition.



**2011 Pilot Program** - In 2011, the City launched a pilot phase of the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program within the Glennon Heights neighborhood. A review of the pilot program identified the need for developing a stronger leadership committee, additional communication mechanisms, and additional financial resources to support community implementation of projects and initiatives.

**2012 Program** - In November 2011, the City solicited applications from neighborhoods interested in participating in the 2012 Sustainable Neighborhoods Program. Four neighborhoods submitted applications; two were selected to participate. Both neighborhoods achieved the highest level of certification. Custom signage is currently being designed for the neighborhoods, and both neighborhoods will be recognized at the August 12, 2013, regular meeting of the Lakewood City Council. Examples of neighborhood accomplishments include two community gardens, alternative transportation and bicycling advocacy, community building, social media, and website development, stewardship of native landscapes, energy-efficiency projects, documentation of neighborhood heritage, connectivity planning, health and wellness programs, and waste reduction.

**2013 Program** - Based on the success of the 2012 Sustainable Neighborhoods program, the City expanded the program in 2013 through a competitive application process. Three neighborhoods have been accepted into the program and are in the process of building communication infrastructure including websites and Facebook pages, identifying initiatives, and organizing leadership teams around selected projects for the year.

**Program Expansion** - As a result of the success of this unique program, both the City and County of Denver and Adams County will be piloting the program beginning August 2013. A formal branding and trademark process along with a dedicated program website and database are being developed in anticipation of expansion of the SN program throughout Colorado.

**Innovation:** The Sustainable Neighborhoods program is a unique program developed by the City of Lakewood. A search for similar programs revealed no municipal certification programs targeting existing neighborhoods with the goal of active participation.

**Transferrable:** The concept, requirements, implementation steps and branding for the program are easily adaptable to other communities. As a result, the City of Lakewood was approached by the Alliance for a Sustainable Colorado, inquiring about our willingness to share the model with other communities. The Alliance viewed the program as a tool to assist communities in successfully taking their sustainability plans from concept to implementation. As a result of the outreach completed by the Alliance for a Sustainable Colorado and City of Lakewood staff, the City and County of Denver and Adams County are piloting an expanded version of the program.

**Excellence:** The program achieves excellence through effective design and marketing, carefully developed systems for tracking projects and accomplishments, by providing assistance for residents in their development of communication infrastructure (including workshops on effective use of social media), and by offering a wide range of templates, customized branding and resources, and individual attention for each neighborhood.

**Unique, Effective, and Promotes Community Progress:** The SN program has resulted in both increased social capital and measureable advancements in sustainability for participating neighborhoods. The two neighborhoods participating in the program in 2012 reported a combined 585 residents with active participation in the program. In addition to neighborhood specific projects, the neighborhoods also participated in community wide events and

long-range planning processes affecting their neighborhoods.