



Topeka DREAMS Program

Discuss. Reimagine. Energize. Act. Measure. Success.

Work Group Members

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Work Group Efforts

A New Approach for Topeka's Neighborhoods

The DREAMS Program is based on neighborhood input and assets, revitalization, activities, and successes. We present it here as an alternative approach to Topeka's current Neighborhood Revitalization program, proposed start 2021.

Neighborhood Goals: Attractive, Safe, Sense of Community

Neighborhood Association Goals: Increased Self-Sufficiency, Neighbor-to-Neighbor Interactions, Meaningful Improvements and Activities

DREAMS has **Four Pillars** at its foundation, each critical to developing and encouraging a strong, healthy community that is safe, desirable, successful, and accountable to the people for input and guidance on how they wish to see their neighborhoods develop over time:

Neighborhood Engagement Infrastructure Housing Community

- We believe that we should always start with celebrating what has been accomplished and learning from those successes.
- We think Community Engagement (CE) should shift to an engagement and access model that primarily focuses on NIA neighborhoods while still assisting other neighborhoods for prevention and sustaining activities.
- CE Staff duties would include assisting with approaches to City and County departments and other resources, Planning (see other side), grantwriting or access to help, assisting residents in building their own events, resulting in improved neighborhood identity, strength and quality and multiplier effect.
- We encourage events such as National Night Out, Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) training, and other opportunities to increase safety and security in our neighborhoods.

- A slight restructuring of the Neighborhood Operating Funds program could provide an incentive to preserve the funds by allowing the CAC to come up with a planned alternative use for unused \$\$.
- We think that Neighborhood Planning should be converted to a freestanding cycle. NIAs would be placed on a 10-year rotation (with two NIAs having their Neighborhood Plans updated each year) for full updates. Other updates could be made upon request, per staffing availability. Linking Historic Preservation planning, when warranted, will also enrich the Neighborhood Planning process.
- We are eager to work collaboratively on critical neighborhood issues such as code compliance and community policing.
- We believe a shift to flexibility and opportunity models in Affordable Housing and Revitalization efforts will better facilitate resident originated transformation within their communities.
- We support and encourage all NIAs to be active members of discussions for the Affordable Housing Plan, with all options available to all neighborhoods every year. These options would include everything from major rehab, exterior rehab, homeownership and infill to self-help rehab, weatherization, accessibility and emergency repairs. Neighborhood-generated opportunities should be prioritized and neighbor-to-neighbor activities should be not only encouraged, but supported. A refreshed Neighborhood Enhancement program should be discussed to include partnerships with a refreshed and enhanced Code Compliance program. All the above programs are to be managed by City and/or contracted vendors.
- We recommend a shift in infrastructure funding from SORT to all City and County funds in their own departments. Funds will be accessed through annual direct bidding in the capital budget processes and community engagement in planning processes.
- We appreciate the \$200,000 in funds committed for neighborhoods for 2021 and urge that it be named the DREAMS Fund and be renewed annually. Fundraising efforts and additional funds from the City should also be attained each year as outlined in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund program guidance. These and other funds could then be competitively awarded for small projects and/or act as local match funds for larger project applications.





Topic:

Restructuring Neighborhood Revitalization: Activity and Frequency

We hope that organizations grow in numbers and in partners, neighborhoods and their NIAs become stronger and directly active in programs and projects that affect them directly, more annual opportunities for meaningful improvements and activities are accessible to all neighborhoods.

Current opportunities:

- Streets:** every 15 years, then limited
- Curb & Gutter:** every 15 years, then limited
- Sidewalks (small projects):** every year
- Sidewalks (large projects):** every 15 years, then limited
- Affordable Housing:** every 15 year, few options
- Park Projects (small):** every year
- Park Projects (large):** Every 15 years
- Special Projects (small):** Every year
- Special Projects (large):** Every 15 years
- Neighborhood Staff:** focused on administration
- Grant Possibilities:** rare
- Neighborhood Planning:** tied to SORT, but only after award had already been made
- TeamUp2CleanUp:** Every 10 years, only in a package

Opportunities could be:

- Every year, everywhere
- Every year, everywhere
- Every year
- Every year, everywhere
- Every year, more options
- Every year
- Every year
- Every year
- Every year
- Focused on neighborhoods
- Always
- Independent rotation, updates always available
- Every year, neighborhoods to choose 'pieces' or ask for package*

* Package might include: Fire hydrants, Storm inlet cleanouts, Brick street recovery, Street sign replacement, Sidewalk renovations, vegetation removal, Walk-and-Talks, Smoke Detectors, House numbers, CPR Instruction, Service fairs, Code sweeps, Police traffic checks, Abandoned vehicles, Vacant structures, Trash pickups, Volunteer house rehab, Infill site review.



Topic:

The Four Pillars and Multipliers

The DREAMS Program has four pillars at its foundation, each a critical component to developing and encouraging a healthy community that is safe, desirable, successful, and accountable to the people for input and guidance on how they wish to see their neighborhoods develop over time. These pillars are:

- **Neighborhood Engagement:** Community-building activities such as communication, meetings, events, neighbor-to-neighbor engagements for health, safety, cleanups, holidays such as Halloween and Christmas, youth-oriented activities, fundraisers, collaborations with other partners or neighborhoods... pretty much anything that engages neighborhoods in a productive way. Measures could be actual numbers of different residents and total numbers of engagements as well as neighbors reporting an increased sense of place belonging, and other measures appropriate to the specific plan. Multiplier effect measures can include such things as whether the engagement of one person was multiplied because that person then brought another person in, if neighbors follow one person's or a neighborhood's activity with one of their own, and so on.
- **Housing:** Any program for maintenance, repair, improvement, addition, replacement or infill of all or part of a property or premises. Measures can include whether completion made the property more attractive, more cost-effective, safer, increased its resale appeal and other. Multipliers could include whether when one person did something (no cost, private cost or with assistance), and the others followed (again, at no cost, private cost or with assistance) with additional related activities or actions.
- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure would include streets, street improvements, curb and gutter, alleys, sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible crossings, bus stops, bikeways, utility lines, wi-fi networks, access points and other shared amenities. Measures would include what was done and its value. Multipliers could include whether Housing, Neighborhood Engagement or other events occurred subsequent to the Infrastructure improvement that appeared to be inspired by the Infrastructure improvement.
- **Community:** Can include health and wellness, education, neighborhood retail or commercial, parks and recreation, community gardens, major development features, activities, partnerships, workforce development, community policing and the like. Measures and Multipliers would be set and measured similar to those above.

Success Measures for DREAMS Program activities related to the Four Pillars:

Level 1 – accomplishing the action/event (level of completion)

Level 2 – related activities occur beyond the scope of the initial action/event (multiplier)

Level 3 – tie action/event to the DREAMS goals (advancement towards goals)



Topic:

How Will We Get There?

Neighborhood Goals: Attractive, Safe, Sense of Community

Neighborhood Association Goals: Increased Self-Sufficiency, Neighbor-to-Nighbor Interactions, Meaningful Improvements and Activities

DREAMS has **Four Pillars** at its foundation, each critical to developing and encouraging a strong, healthy community that is safe, desirable, successful, and accountable to the people for input and guidance on how they wish to see their neighborhoods develop over time:

Neighborhood Engagement Infrastructure Housing Community

Celebrating Accomplishments

Start with celebrating what has been accomplished so far in Topeka (and learning from it). Encourage neighborhoods to share successful past programs with each other. Hold a program-long celebration of existing projects and programs that have been done to date (a one-time celebration) to kick off the DREAMS initiative.

Community Engagement

Shift to an engagement and access model. Primary focus will still be NIAs, with other neighborhoods for prevention and sustaining activities. Staff duties would include being a liaison to City and County departments, Planning (see below), grantwriting or access to help, and directly helping residents build their own events, resulting in improved neighborhood identity, strength and quality and multiplier effect. Neighborhood-generated opportunities should be prioritized and neighbor-to-neighbor activities encouraged. Slight restructuring of the Neighborhood Operating Funds program could provide an incentive to preserve the funds by allowing Citizen's Advisory Council (CAC) to come up with a planned alternative use for unused \$\$.

Neighborhood Planning

Streamline the process. Freestanding cycle. NIA 10-year rotation (2 per year) for full updates. Updates upon request thereafter, per staffing availability. Link to Historic Preservation planning as needed.

Affordable Housing and Revitalization

Shift to flexibility and opportunity model. Engage all NIAs in planning for the Affordable Housing menu, with all options available to all neighborhoods every year. These options would include everything from Major Rehab, Exterior Rehab, Homeownership and Infill to Self-Help Rehab, Weatherization, Accessibility and Emergency Repairs. Neighborhood-generated opportunities prioritized and neighbor-to-neighbor activities encouraged. Work collaboratively to refresh Neighborhood Enhancement and Code Compliance Programs (that includes a variety of inspections) will be critical. Programs to be managed by City and/or contracted vendors.

Shift from current Stages of Resource Targeting (SORT) parameters to a program that provides access to all City and County infrastructure funds in their own departments, either through annual set-asides or direct bidding in the capital budget processes. Adjust neighborhood annual planning and application cycles as needed for timing. Create DREAMS Program with \$200,000 per year for grants of \$100 to \$200,000 that can be used for small projects, local match, etc.

Appeal and Safety

Refresh in-kind and neighborhood-based cleanup, beautification and safety programs. Support that with owner- and neighborhood-based Code Enforcement vegetation program. Encourage links with events such as National Night Out and training like the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) program. If a communitywide Anti-Blight/Beautification initiative is established, neighborhoods could participate by assisting in planning, volunteering and working with partners as well as referring residents in need of assistance to the program. Retain eligibility of dumpster rental fees for cleanup events using NIA funds.

Direct Action

Choose periodically to take direct action to influence needed changes in plans, policies, procedures and public laws through neighborhood and/or local and regional coalitions. Actions could include calls, written communication and testimony in public forums regarding issues including, but not limited to, code compliance; community policing; affordable housing implementation; Street, bikeways, sidewalks and utilities plans; HUD funds spending plans (Consolidated Plan and any other); TeamUp2CleanUp or similar programs; Neighborhood Planning processes and products; Zoning; Parks and Rec plans and budgets (County); vegetation and overgrowth policy and initiatives; race and culture, aging, youth, and disability initiatives.



Topic:

Neighborhood Objectives and Available Resources

Neighborhood Goals: Attractive, Safe, Sense of Community

Neighborhood Association Goals: Increased Self-Sufficiency, Neighbor-to-Nighbor Interactions, Meaningful Improvements and Activities

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Each year each neighborhood is encouraged to come up with DREAMS – usually three, any category, ideally as SMART goals. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

We have a dream that _____ .

We have a dream that _____ .

We have a dream that _____ .

For example, “NIA X has a dream that we will complete five blocks of curb and gutter repair/replacement on Anyplace Street in our neighborhood before December, 2021.”

Community Engagement (CE) staff will assist as needed with identifying, framing and pursuing the DREAMS through strategies, city, neighborhood, volunteer, other types of resources and in how to establish timelines and engage neighbors. (Note: Not all will require \$\$.) CE Staff will also provide assistance with grantseeking and grantwriting, training opportunities, and seeking and arranging infill and redevelopment programs.

Neighborhood Planning staff, in conjunction with CE staff support, will make available all Neighborhood Plans, and periodic updates to the Plans to all neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods, with staff assistance as needed, will develop and pursue the goals.

City resources available to neighborhoods will include, but not be limited to:

- Affordable Housing funds – minimum \$1.3 million/year (Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investments Partnership Program (HOME))
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), has a \$700,000 per year goal

- Infrastructure funds – streamline process, minimum \$ 1.4 million/year (City CIP program)
- DREAMS Fund - \$200,000/year (could be CDBG, City, or other funds)
- Training funds - \$25,000/year (City General Fund)
- NIA Support funds - \$65,000/year (CDBG)

What other resources are we talking about? TeamUp2CleanUp components, Code Compliance, Topeka Opportunity to Own (TOTO), Nonprofit and Private Infill Housing, Grants the City has received such as Federal Home Land Bank (FHLB), Shawnee County Parks and Recreation, Bikeway and Trails, Other private and public competitive grants, Federal funding opportunities , Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO)-funded programming, Community Policing, other Law Enforcement programs, In-kind contributions of goods or services from local businesses, schools, and non-profit agencies, Cost-shared and Public/Private Partnership (PPP) programs, resources from the neighbors and neighborhood.

Success Measures for DREAMS activities:

Level 1 – accomplishing the action/event (level of completion)

Level 2 – related activities occur beyond the scope of the initial action/event (multiplier)

Level 3 – tie action/event to the DREAMS goals (advancement toward goals)



Topic:

Transitioning to the DREAMS Program from SORT

Community Engagement staff job descriptions change in December 2020. Start with a look-back, identifying and celebrating successful strategies and accomplishments January 2021.

DREAMS goal-setting begins for all NIAs in January 2021.

Health Maps will continue to be used to determine eligibility for neighborhoods to be designated as NIAs for HUD funding purposes. Otherwise, ***Planning and Community Engagement staff, in collaboration with CAC, will determine valid performance measures for Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Improvement Associations*** by April 2021. Staff will also ***develop a format for the NIAs to record their DREAMS goals and the three levels of measurement*** by April 2021 as well.

The Consolidated Plan (Con Plan) will continue to reflect all neighborhood-related activities and funding sources. ***Community Engagement staff will work with CAC to recommend to the Con Plan and thoroughly review and approve/comment before it is submitted to the City Council and HUD.***

Neighborhood Planning shifts to 10-year rotation for full updates (2 per year) and as-needed for specifics in 2021. 10-year calendar to be set by February 2021. CAC members, as reps of their NIAs, assist in setting rotation.

Affordable Housing programs become available to all NIAs starting January 2021. First come, first served. Pursue as part of DREAMS goals and/or as opportunities emerge. Anticipated amounts and programs to be available in the coming year should be known by October of each year via the Housing Department and the Con Plan.

Infrastructure funds will go on a bid schedule in 2021 – requests due to Public Works by August 2021, decisions made as part of City CIP in March/April 2022 for work starting in 2023 and out-years. Cycle will repeat annually. Report of already-scheduled Infrastructure projects for 2021, 2022 and after will be provided to NIAs.

DREAMS Fund will take applications in June 2021, using modified Empowerment Grant guidelines, for 2021 grants to be awarded in August 2021. Grant guidelines for 2021 and for 2022 and future will be developed by CAC in consultation with staff by April 2021. Applications for 2022 funds will be due August 1, 2021, simultaneous with Infrastructure applications.

CAC will be responsible to receive, process and make recommendations on these grants.

Code Compliance should be done by Property Maintenance.

TeamUp2CleanUp transitions into options for every neighborhood every year, starting 2021. Recommended that proposals are requested to arrive annually with DREAMS Fund proposals and ***both are collaboratively***

reviewed and recommended for award by CAC.

Establish plan for unused Neighborhood Support funds by April 2021. To be developed and advised by CAC.

Transition process for already-awarded SORT designees

SORT designees for 2019-2021 and 2020-2022 will *convert to DREAMS planning for their SORT program* and annual planning immediately.

Affordable Housing will be cut loose from SORT Program, but will still be available to that NIA on the same basis as others.

SORT infrastructure commitment will be sustained, but *will convert to an “up to” the amount*. No obligation to create projects just to spend the money. Option to shift immediately to staff assistance in looking for other sources if what the awarded NIA wants in their DREAMS plan is not an eligible SORT project.



Topic:

Community/Neighborhood Engagement Job Description (assume 2.0 FTE)

Duties:

- Support NIAs in the formal neighborhood planning process (expected to be 2 per year, plus updates as needed), as well as in development of internal NIA programming, pursuit of project funds and fundraising.
- Guide NIAs in planning, revitalization, and encouragement efforts by connecting with any government department or service needed, citywide or targeted initiatives (e.g. beautification, cleanups), and expert resources.
- Assist with grantwriting.
- Support NIAs in membership, communication and activities. Seek and connect NIAs with appropriate training. Assist in connection with partnership programs in the private or other government sectors (e.g. youth, safety, food, recreation).

Qualifications:

- Knowledgeable about the following: all City services, processes and timelines; Community services; Housing and commercial redevelopment and innovations; Zoning; Real estate; Housing and infrastructure construction; Basics of lending and financing alternatives; Taxes and assessments; Planning; All existing plans affecting neighborhoods; Recreation; Volunteerism and resources; Historic preservation; Current trends and events.
- Able to help people and groups help themselves (e.g. be resourceful, build teams, keep up with changes).
- Understand neighborhood and organizational dynamics.
- Understand and be able to work with the different life stage cohorts – broadly defined as youth at all stages, young adults (25-45), mid-life adults (45-65), seniors (65+).
- Able to work with each neighborhood independently with its unique character, issues and dynamics.

Team attributes:

At least one person from the team should have a strong background in and deep understanding of redevelopment, neighborhood and community empowerment, and grantwriting, each with demonstrated mastery and success. If any of the above qualifications are waived, a resource partnership that meets all criteria must be created for training, everyday connection and possible contracting.



Topic:

The DREAMS Fund

Grant Application Amounts: \$100-200,000

Purpose of Grants: To fund strategic investments in neighborhoods
Funds can be used for an entire program or as local match, including being pledged match for a major grant

Options: Any project/program that ties to the Four Pillars, with evident justification on why it is a strategic investment in Topeka. Success Measures are expected of each DREAMS project. NIA must show how project/program fits into overall goals for Neighborhoods and NIAs.

Scoring Criteria: *Yet to be developed*
Extra points could be awarded to neighborhoods who demonstrate
- At least 20 residents involved in the application
- Independent neighborhood initiatives that did not involve City funds or anything more than advice from City staff

Who will Advise and Award? The CAC will advise, including consultation with applicants as well as with City, regarding optimizing funds. Staff from Community Engagement as well as other appropriate departments will advise, and City Council will vote on awards.

Funding Sources:

2021 - \$200,000 (\$60,000 or more from CDBG, remainder from a source to be designated by the City Manager); 2022 and after – could be the same as 2021, 100% from Debt Service Fund, or some other combination or sources to be designated by the City Manager.

Projects that would qualify for DREAMS Fund dollars could be put into the full CIP or other City or partner program, thereby freeing up \$\$ in the DREAMS Fund for additional neighborhood investments.



Topic:

From the City's Side: Transition of Funding and Administration

Affordable Housing

CDBG, HOME, Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and other federal and major grant (such as FHLB) funds will be spelled out in the Con Plan and administered as they always have been. Programs like TOTO, Infill Housing, Homebuyer Counseling, Tenant-Landlord Counseling will continue in the Con Plan and be administered as before. Housing staff will also be working with affordable housing providers on funding and programming from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and otherwise. As those sources are known in advance, they will be included in the Con Plan as before, and managed as before.

Infrastructure

SORT, as a \$1.4 million line item, will begin to disappear as early as 2021 when East Topeka North and Valley Park's plans become known. Wherever their DREAMS programming can be accommodated by an existing line item in the CIP, it will be earmarked for that NIA, but will be funded out of its CIP "bucket." Community Engagement, Planning and Public Works staff will assist the NIAs in their planning and options; Public Works staff will administer all projects, including all financial and project recording and reporting. In August 2021, applications of interest will come from the NIAs' DREAMS plans instead. Some applications will be affirmations of interest in projects that are already calendared in the CIP, some will be requests for new projects, to be calendared somewhere in the CIP, if funds and priorities allow.

Requests for the DREAMS Fund will come in at the same time. Those requests that are of a scope that they are CIP eligible should be considered for CIP inclusion as well, based on dollars already available or for consideration of inclusion. There is an expectation that at least \$1.4 million of the CIP each year will be dedicated to projects within the NIA boundaries.

We recommend a shift in infrastructure funding from the SORT Program to all City and County funds in their own departments. Funds will be accessed through annual direct bidding in the capital budget processes and community engagement in planning processes.

DREAMS Fund

2021 - \$200,000 (\$60,000 or more from CDBG, remainder from a source to be designated by the City Manager); 2022 and after – could be the same as 2021, 100% from Debt Service Fund, or some other combination or sources to be designated by the City Manager.

TeamUp2CleanUp Program

2021 will transition from being targeted as a package solely to selected intensive care blocks in two neighborhoods per year to allowing components or full packages to be open to requests. CAC would assist in developing guidelines. Requests would likely be due in August as part of the menu with other City program and funding requests.



Topic:

Potential Citizens Advisory Council Enhancements

[Below are ideas related to the CAC in general that surfaced throughout the four months the Neighborhood Initiatives Work Group met to discuss the Affordable Housing and Consolidated Plan. They are presented here only as a record of thoughts and ideas from the Work Group's discussions, not as decisions made. The CAC may choose to discuss - or not - any or all of these ideas as they deem appropriate.]

The CAC could be more member-driven, with direct and regular support from Community Engagement staff, and be recognized and assisted as needed by other City staff. The roles of the CAC **could include**:

- Engaging and inspiring neighborhood preservation and improvement.
- Officially advising all HUD-related neighborhood programming.
- Otherwise advising, per preference, all other City plans (CIP, Bikeways, Pedestrian, Land-Use, Policing, Code Compliance and others such as Zoning, Transportation, and more), County plans (Parks and Rec, Trails, Criminal Justice and other) and such other public/private plans as Affordable Housing.
- Advising goals and funding for the DREAMS Fund.
- Serving as a conduit for neighborhood-to-neighborhood communication, collaboration and celebration.
- Generating joint initiatives.

Perhaps the CAC could meet all 12 months? December could be a good time to report and celebrate successes over the year, and the extra meetings would give more time to review and comment on documents that directly affect the NIAs.

Possible Meeting Content:

- Major or minor education features regarding neighborhood engagement and revitalization – could be a video or speaker from outside (or inside) the city, or an NIA showcasing a program
- Stories and celebration of individual and joint initiatives
- Review of a relevant plan or initiative - as-is and/or to discuss recommendation or opportunities
- Problem-solving and mutual support on individual and joint initiatives