

Growing Strong Neighborhoods: Rebirth of the Aging Suburban Community

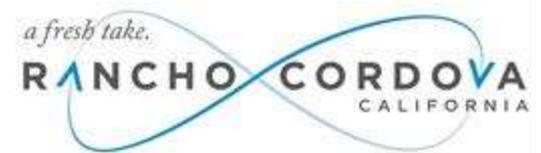
David M. Sander, Ph.D.

Vice Mayor

City of Rancho Cordova

Agenda for Today:

- Why are we here?
- What are First Tier Suburbs?
- What challenges do we face?
- What can be done to head off these challenges?
- Rancho Cordova examples –
 - Growing Strong Neighborhoods programs
- Questions



Why are we here?

*Fact:
About 78%
of Rancho
Cordovans
voted for
Incorporation
in November
2002 – none
of whom
were hoping
for a
continued
decline in
our
community.*

- Rancho Cordova Incorporated as a City in July 2003.
- We knew we had major issues to correct from our mismanagement under Sacramento County
 - Bad Regional Image
 - Poor, dangerous, drug infested, “Rancho Cambodia”
 - Deteriorating Retail Environment
 - Old Infrastructure
- We soon learned it wouldn’t be that simple
 - Significant wealth gap, with continuing loss
 - Continuing Economic loss
 - Unattractive neighborhoods for home buyers

What is a First Tier Suburb?

*Fact:
About 20%
of Americans
live in a First
Tier Suburb*

- First Tier Suburbs are cities and towns outside of central cities and inside the ring of developing suburbs and rural area.
- Also Called:
 - Inner Ring Suburbs, Inner Suburbs, First Ring Suburbs
 - Old, Older or Mature Suburbs
 - Or “Neglected, Declining, Unfavored, Struggling,...”
- Typical Commonalities
 - Post WWII growth, 1945-1970 boomtowns
 - Began as attractive communities, middle income
 - Rapid suburban development, cookie cutter houses, with limited local access to jobs or services



First Tier Suburbs Advantages

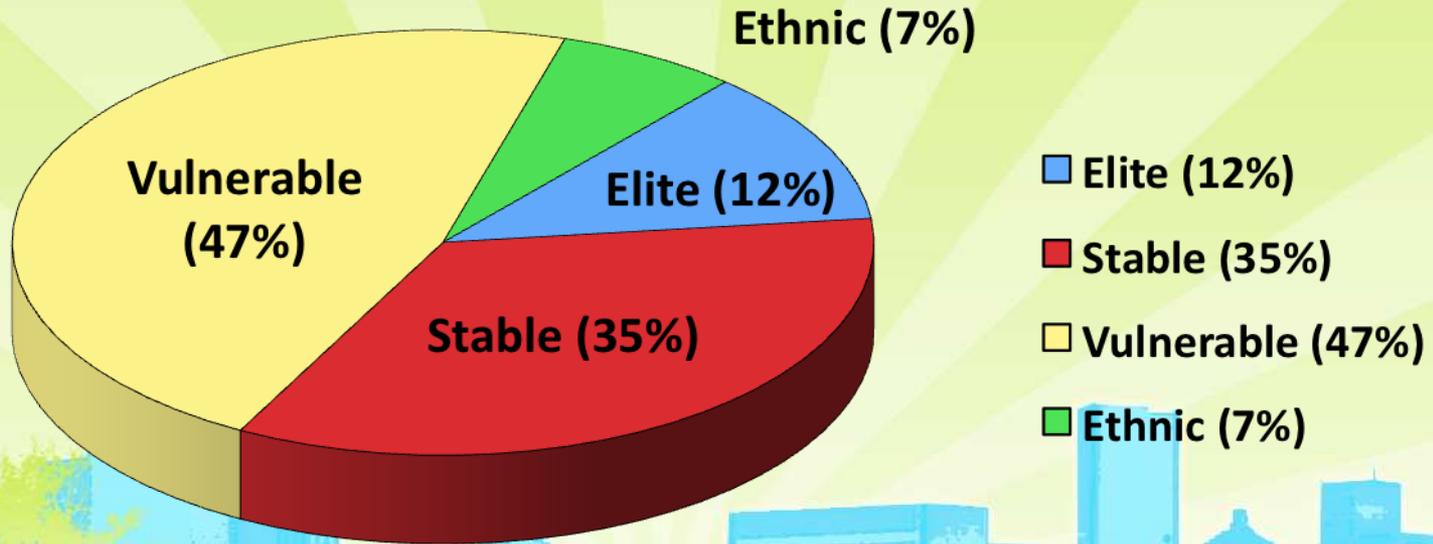
*Fact:
In a
competitive
real estate
environment,
older
suburban
communities
have real
advantages.*

- Established Communities
 - Neighborhood Features are in Place, Schools
Parks, Churches, Shopping
- Safer than more Urban Settings
- Large Lots & Mature Trees
 - More Space than Urban or Edge Communities
- Better Housing Values per Square Foot
- Location, Location, Location
 - Access to Central City
 - Access to Jobs



How many First Tier Suburbs?

*Fact:
About
20% of
Americans
live in
First Tier
Suburbs*



Facts: *There are about 1700 first tier suburbs in the United States, of which about half are classified as vulnerable or distressed*

HUD defines 'distressed' suburbs as those with population declines of 5+%, and poverty of 20+%

Risk Factors for Suburbs:

- **Rapid Growth 1945-1980**
 - The faster, the greater risk
 - Generational waves & service demands
- **Large swaths of similar homes**
 - Not much variation in housing values
 - Housing that ages out at the same time
- **Moderate value homes**
 - Limited income diversity - locked in to certain level
- **Lacking a Sense of Place or Major Attractor**
 - Historical Asset, Major employer, etc.
- **Availability of Newer Suburban Areas**
 - FTS squeezed between suburbanization and urbanization

*Fact:
About one half
of inner ring
suburbs are
thought to be
vulnerable or
at risk of great
decline.*



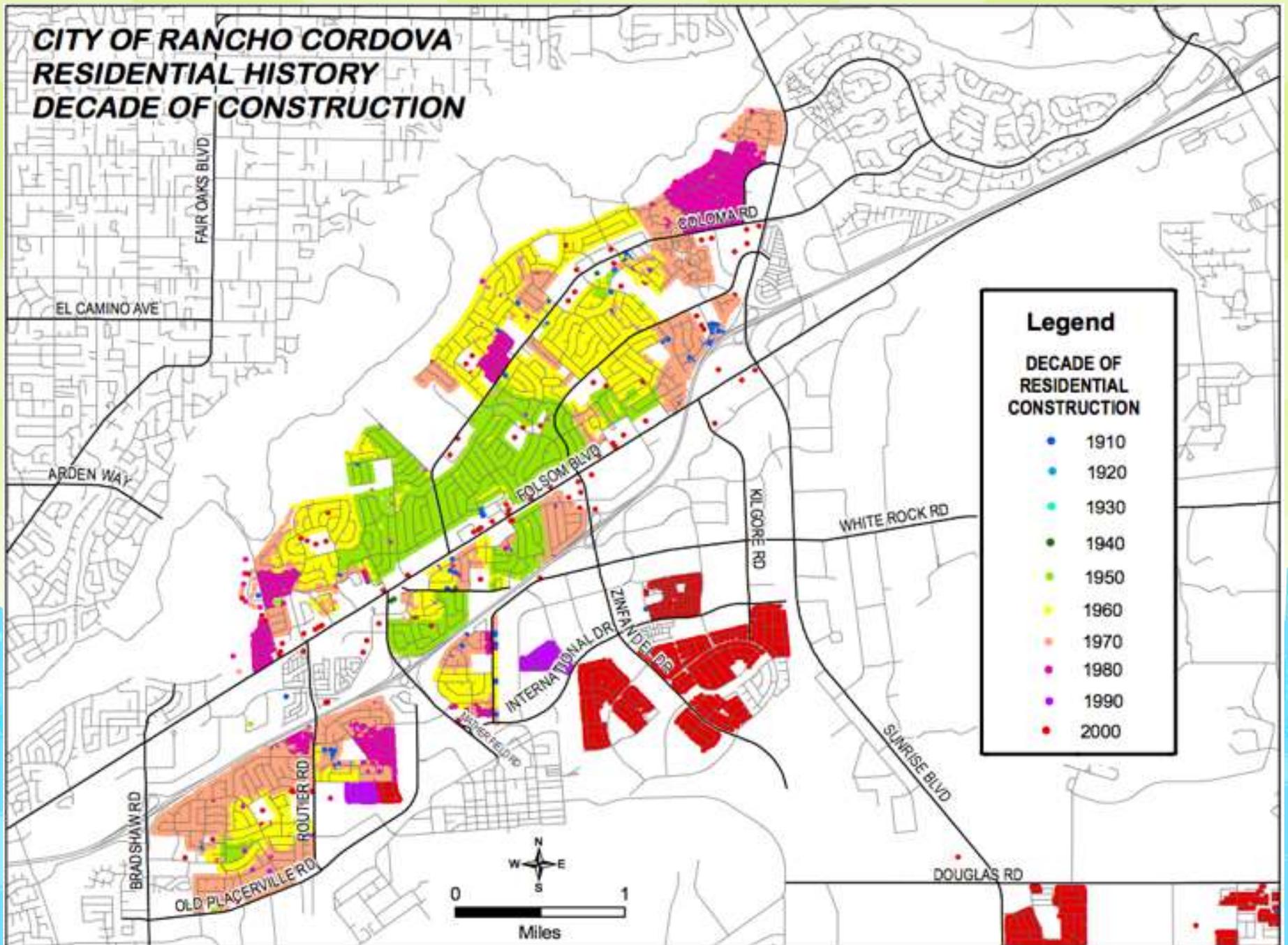
How Many apply to us?

- ✓ Rapid Growth 1945-1980
 - The faster, the greater risk
 - Generational waves & service demands
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CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA RESIDENTIAL HISTORY DECADE OF CONSTRUCTION



Key Problem?

Declining Median Income

- Median income typically falls in older suburbs as the wealthier residents move to newer suburbs, and are replaced by residents with lower average incomes.
- Newer residents therefore have fewer resources to spend on property maintenance or improvement, or to add to the local economy
- Our suburban communities were designed for middle to upper incomes – not lower incomes

*Fact:
Researchers
generally agree
on the key
problem facing
mature
suburbs...*



Sacramento Poverty Data

Urban Core

Suburbs

*Fact:
Suburban Poor
outnumber the
Urban Poor*

82k

Poor Population 2012

139k

+21%

Change, 2000-2012

+48%

66.8%

Poor living in 20% poverty
census tracts, 2012

44.8%

-5.2%

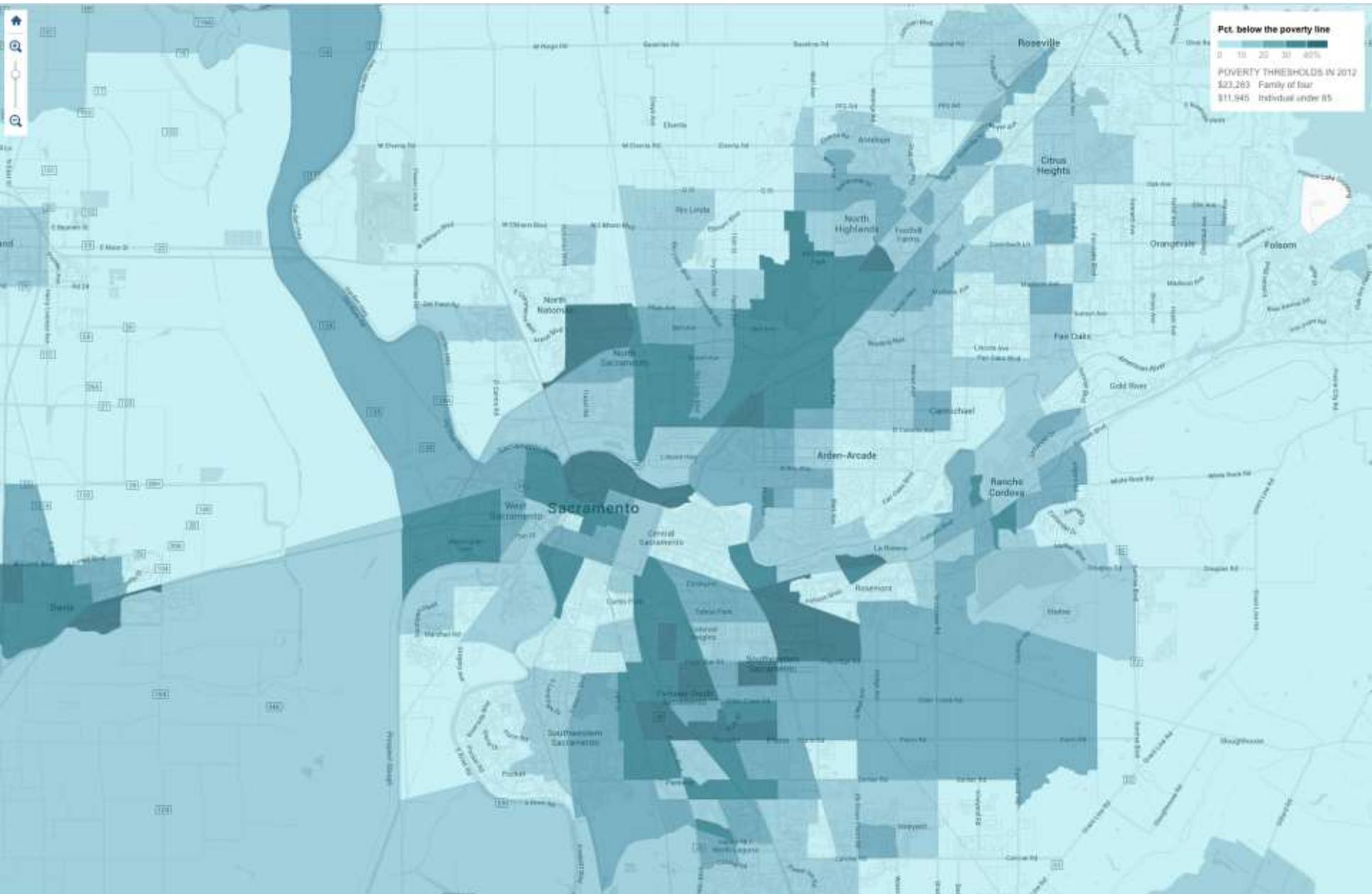
Change , 2000-2012

+7.9%

Source: Brookings Institute, Metropolitan Policy Program



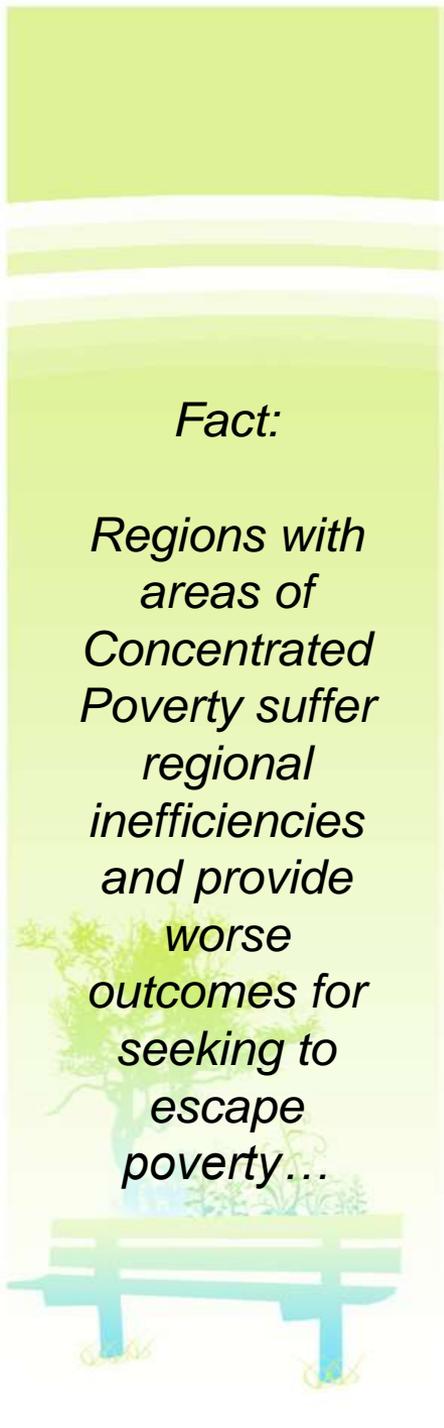
Sacramento Poverty Map



Worst Case Scenario?

Fact:

Regions with areas of Concentrated Poverty suffer regional inefficiencies and provide worse outcomes for seeking to escape poverty...



Declining Median Income can lead to Concentrated Poverty in an ill-prepared suburban community.

- First Tier suburbs do not have the services or infrastructure that has been built in urban centers to serve the needs of this community.
- Concentrated Poverty in any location is counterproductive for the impoverished.
 - Higher crime, low performing schools, poor housing and healthcare, limited access to services and jobs
 - Beyond the impoverished and the local community, regions suffer from inefficiencies when poverty becomes concentrated in certain areas.

Declining Median Income Cycle

*Fact:
Suburbs are
considered the
archetype of
prosperity.*

Fundamental Problem: Declining Income of Residents

- as properties turnover, successive owners are comparatively of lower economic status

*Service
Demand
Increases*

Quality of Life Impacts

- Higher Crime Rates
- Infrastructure Failure
- Lower School Test Scores
- Other Social Dysfunction

Economic Impacts

- Lower property values & homeownership
- Declining Commercial and Retail Business
- Declining Rents
- Declining Revenue for local government

*Populati
on may
drop*

Resulting Fiscal Stress

*Fact:
Older suburban
cities have a
third less tax
capacity than
urban centers*

- Property, Sales and Income taxes make up 86% of local revenues for suburbs
 - As median income, housing values and local sales tax revenues fall, local government revenues also fall
- Much Suburban Infrastructure is need of repair
 - Transportation, community facilities and utilities need constant maintenance and eventually replacement
 - Poor infrastructure condition limits economic development
- Inter-governmental aid is directed elsewhere
 - Limited resources disproportionately consumed by edge communities and central cities - falling political capital
- Suburban cities may not have the tax or economic capacity to heal themselves



Bottom Line?

Fact: First Tier Suburbs are poorly equipped to deal with the social service demands of an increasing impoverished population.

- Many First Tier Suburbs are facing serious physical and economic problems derived from the falling median income of their residents.
- The quality of their housing stock, infrastructure, schools and local economies make them non-competitive with newer suburbs or central cities.
- The rise of suburban poverty in the suburbs and the needs of a more impoverished population for government services deepens the challenge for local government at the same time that revenues are declining with property values, median income, and local economic activity.



First Tier Suburbs at a Decision Point

**Decreasing Revenues
& Economic Capacity**



*Benign,
Passive
Inaction*

*Positive,
Targeted
Action*

Decline

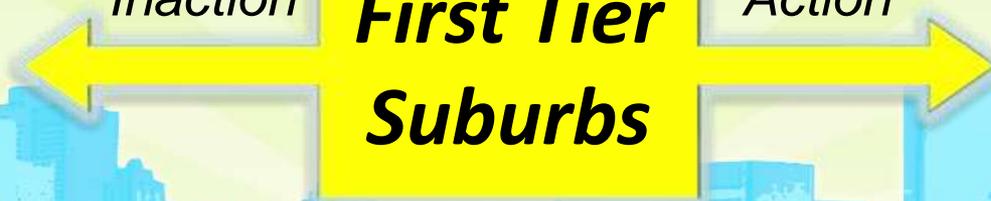
- Declining Revenues
- Failing Infrastructure
- Increasing Crime & Civic Dysfunction
- Little Economic Opportunity

***First Tier
Suburbs***

Renewal

- Stable Revenue
- Solid Infrastructure
- Healthy Civic Involvement
- Good Economic Opportunity

**Increasing
Infrastructure and
Service Demand**



How do we Measure Decline?

*Fact:
Suburban
ownership
turnover
averages 50%
in a decade*

If we are going to undertake proactive measures to avoid concentrated poverty, we need real measurements:

1. Median Income
2. Housing Quality
3. Property Values
4. Crime Rate
5. Educational Success
6. Population Changes
7. Other Quality of Life Measures

Best option – Property Values

- available data, rapid turnover, market sensitive
- parallels other available measures



Property Value Impacts

Improving Property Values

- ↑ – Good Income Mix
- ↑ – Sustained Business Activity, Growth
- ↑ – Lower Crime
- ↑ – Good Schools
- ↑ – Rents Improve
- ↑ – Good City Revenues
- ↑ – Low Overhead
- ↑ – Investment Likely
- ↑ – Stable Neighborhoods
- ↑ – Higher Quality of Life

Declining Property Values

- ↓ – Economic Status Declines
- ↓ – Fewer Businesses, Increasing Vacancies
- ↓ – Higher Crime
- ↓ – Declining Schools
- ↓ – Lower Rents
- ↓ – Declining City Revenue
- ↓ – Higher Service Costs
- ↓ – Investment Unlikely
- ↓ – “Road to Slumhood”
- ↓ – Lower Quality of Life



Roots of Suburban Decline

*Fact:
Suburban
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in a decade*

Homeowners have real *Options*:

1. Reinvest in their home

- if neighbors do the same, may recover the investment
- if neighbors don't, lose investment

**Property
Value Impact**



2. Stay but don't reinvest

- hope the neighborhood improves as your property declines

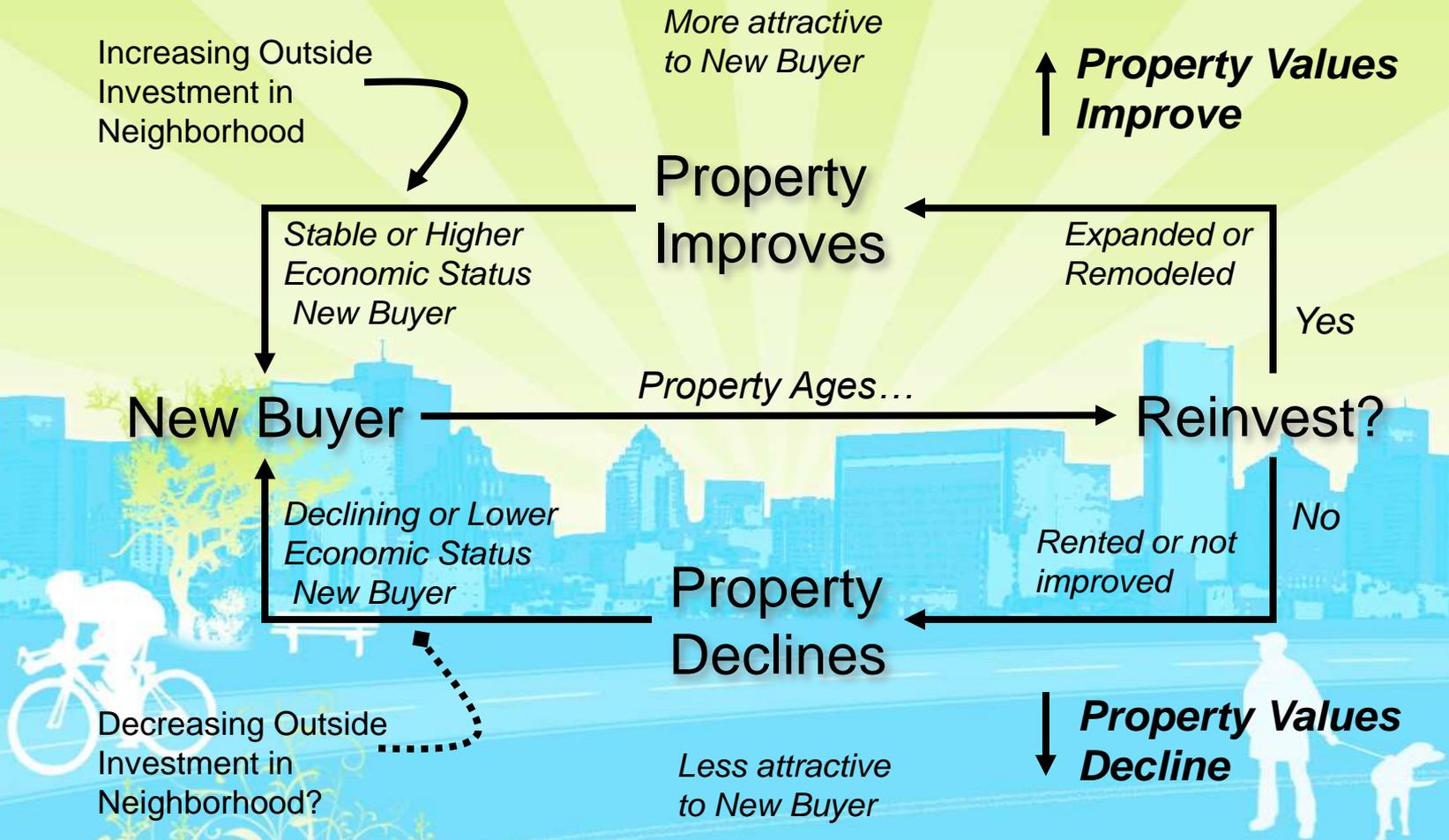


3. Leave the community - move to newer suburb

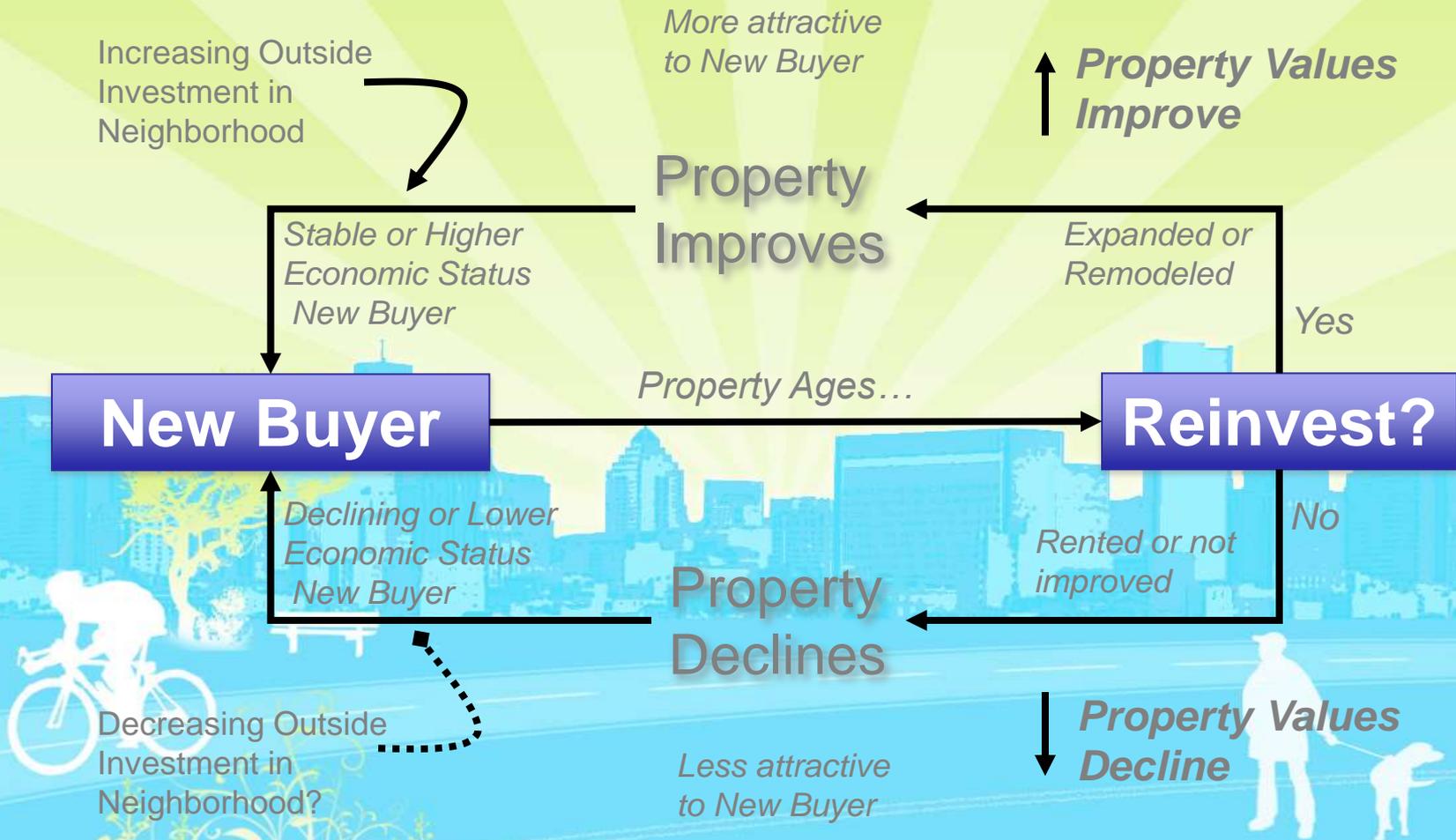
- sell to lower income buyer
- rent to lower income resident (worst impact)



Property Values Cycle in Aging Neighborhoods

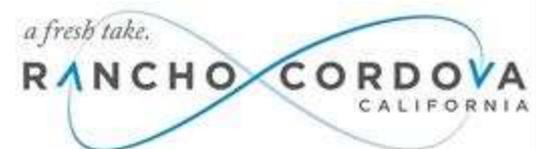


Two Key Decision Points

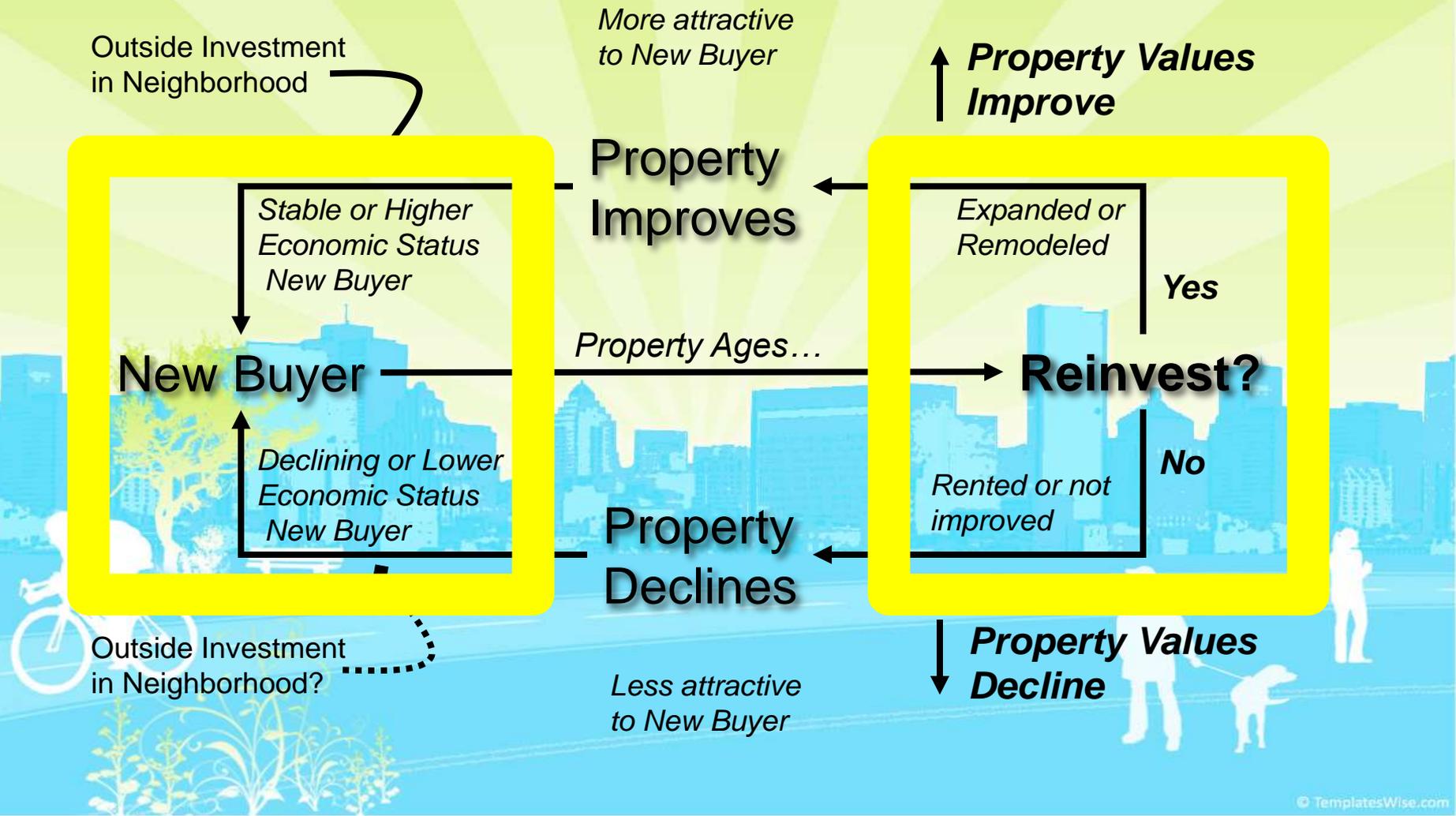


Key Questions

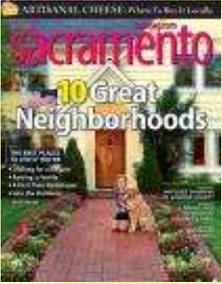
- **How do People decide where to live?**
 - What makes them want to buy a home here or live in our community?
- **What makes people want to stay in our community?**
 - What factors go into that decision?



Property Values Cycle in Aging Neighborhoods



How do People Decide Where to Live?



1. **Crime** – *Do I feel safe here?*
2. **Schools** – *Are there good schools here? Test Scores?*
3. **Poverty/Economics** – *Do I feel comfortable here, with my income level and economic opportunities? Does this place have the services/stores I need?*
4. **Housing Quality** – *Is this home up to my standards? Is the neighborhood nice enough?*
5. **Growth** – *Is this community growing and healthy or is it dying? New Homes? New investment?*
6. **Transportation Accessibility** – *What's my commute? Can I easily get around?*
7. **Aesthetics & Recreation** – *What amenities?*

Fact:
Single greatest
measure of
neighborhood
health – **Do
residents
believe in a
positive
future for
their
neighborhood
?**



What makes people want to stay in a community?

Simply put –

Great communities are places where residents believe in the positive future of their community.

People in communities make decisions based on the future prospects for that community.

- “Will my investment here be worth it over time?”

Residents who don't see a positive future will not engage or invest in the community.



Fact:

Single greatest measure of neighborhood health – Do residents believe in a positive future for their neighborhood?



What can fix our problem?

- Need to seek balance economically
 - Healthier mix of incomes
 - -- > Raise Property Values
- Decrease Crime & Disorder
- Improve our Schools

- Improve our Image
- Improve Retail Environment
- Improve our Built Environment
 - Housing, Infrastructure, Amenities
- Improve our Quality of Life Measures (FUN)

*Fact:
The means of
fixing first tier
suburbs is
understudied in
academia.*



What has been done elsewhere?

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academia.*

- Policing, Enforcement & Image
 - Apply Broken Windows Theory
 - Code Enforcement
 - Image Enhancement & Civic Engagement
- Development - *Assumes profitable investment is possible*
 - Reinvention, Economic Development
 - Housing Approaches: Rehab, Affordable, etc.
- Regional Options
 - Regulatory Growth controls, etc.
 - Regional Partnerships
- State & National Solutions
 - Limited federal funding for neighborhood stabilization and renewal





GROWING STRONG

A stylized graphic featuring a green tree on the left and an orange house on the right, both positioned above a horizontal orange line.

Neighborhoods

IN THE CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA

An Example of the Problem...



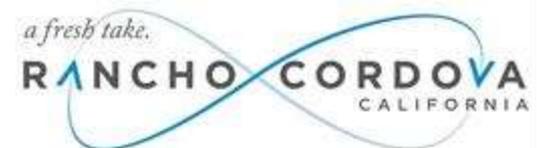
Decades of pre-incorporation neglect by county government

Growing Strong Neighborhoods



Mission:

Through education, enforcement, and investment in the city's neighborhoods, residents would realize the image of the incorporation they envisioned, enhance their expectations of their community, and transform their neighborhoods into safer, cleaner and healthier environments.



Principles of the Program

- GSN will require on-going effort to achieve lasting and measurable results – perhaps decades, not just a few years
- GSN is a core driver of many current and potential City programs – every City function involved – every City Department involved
- GSN can help set priorities to “do what is important” – not just “do what is easy”
 - *based on real metrics not just intuition*
- Community and Citizen participation will be key to implementation
 - *City Role: Broker and Facilitator*



Citizen Engagement

*“Multiply the
Picnics!”*

*- Henry Ward
Beecher*

- The days of top-down do-everything government are past
- Flattened government with active citizens is the new normal, engaged as:
 - Volunteers
 - Planners and visionaries
 - Community Partners - Turning citizen customers into **citizen partners**
- *Lots of bang for the buck*



Policing and Enforcement

“Broken Windows” theory is applied to avoid anti-social behavior through the diligent maintenance of a well-ordered environment.

- o *Theory: Where community standards have fallen, they can be raised to:*
 - Enhance property values
 - Improve quality of life
 - Involve residents in the renewal and establishment of higher property maintenance standards
 - Fits in with Broken Windows theory
- **Police**
 - Community Oriented Policing
 - Targeted special actions on chronic problems
 - Neighborhood Watch / Business Watch
- **Code Enforcement**
 - Proactive, multi-department approaches

Broken Windows Theory

“Broken Windows” theory was first described by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in 1982.

- o *“Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside”.*
- o Small Disorder -> Bigger Disorder -> Crime
- o Disorder like litter, graffiti, properties in poor repair signal to people that this is not a place where order is maintained, or where people care about their community enough to clean it up.



Broken Windows Examples

Broken Windows theory has been tested by numerous experiments.

Perhaps it's most famous utilization was in New York City as a basis for that city's remarkable turnaround.

- Envelope with \$10 bill sticking out of mailbox
 - Clean Environment 13% theft
 - Littered Environment 25% theft
 - Graffiti Environment 27% theft

- Bike with unwanted flyer
 - Clean Environment 33% littered
 - Graffiti Environment 70% littered

- Fence with shortcut & bicycles at parking lot
(Opening in the fence was a 200m shortcut. Signs prohibited the use of the shortcut and the locking of bikes to the fence.)
 - Using Shortcut with bikes but no locks 27%
 - Using shortcut with bikes locked to fence 82%

(The Spreading of Disorder, Kees Keizer, Siegwart Lindenberg, Linda Steg, Science, 2008.)

Broken Windows & Disorder

Disorder is a violation of social norms.

Disorder triggers a “flight or fight” response.

Social Disorder

- *Episodic*
- Prostitution
- Panhandling
- Drinking
- Catcalling
- Graffiti
- Vandalism

Physical Disorder

- *Constant & Ongoing*
- Abandoned Buildings
- Abandoned Cars
- Trash and Litter
- Vacant Lots
- Negligence & Decay

Disorder erodes people’s sense of control over the neighborhood and what goes on there.



What can be done in Rancho Cordova?

- Policing, Enforcement & Image
 - Proactively Apply Broken Windows Theory
 - Code Enforcement
 - Targeted Policing
 - Image Enhancement
 - Appearance, Fun, Arts, Events & Media
 - Civic Engagement
 - Neighborhood level focus, Events
- Development
 - Economic Development – Retail & Jobs
 - Housing Approaches: Rehab, Affordable, etc.
 - Improve our Built Environment
 - Infrastructure improvements, Cycling, etc.

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Growing Strong Neighborhoods Programs

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- **Blightbusters** - Multi-department, proactive enforcement
- **Rental Property Inspection** – comprehensive & firm
- **Focus on 50** – GIS/data-driven Blightbusters successor
- **Multiple Ordinance & Zoning Updates**
 - Property Maintenance, Panhandling, Administrative Citations, Etc.
 - Restricted Uses for liquor stores, check cashing, massage, used goods, smoke shops, marijuana dispensaries, etc.
- **“Have a Heart, Donate Smart”** - Vagrancy Enforcement
- **Rancho Cordova Beautification** - Infrastructure, Graffiti
- **Neighborhood Watch** – with Broken Windows emphasis
- **Volunteerism / Civic Engagement / Events**
 - Cordova Community Council partnership with the City
 - Neighborhood Civic Engagement Project
 - City Volunteers and VINS



Example: Blight Busters

- *“Cleaning up Dodge”*
- A first step in our Growing Strong Neighborhoods Program
- Proactive sweeps of entire city
 - over 2 years with 500 homes or businesses per event
- Coordinated actions using a large multi-department, multi-agency, multidisciplinary team
- *Goal - help residents identify and correct problems of blight and nuisance that impact property values and safety*



Blight Busters Team

Enforcement activities can encompass many departments, multiple agencies, and volunteers.

- Code Enforcement
- Police Department (POP, traffic, etc.)
- Probation Agency
- Child Protection Agency
- Housing
- Building Inspection
- Fire Department
- Economic Development
- Animal Control
- Police Department Volunteers
- Neighborhood Services Volunteers
- Neighborhood Watch / Weed & Seed



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Rancho Cordova & Rental Housing

- Rancho Cordova is home to more than 12,000 apartment units – a legacy of our Air Force history.
- Many apartment complexes were in poor repair, and declining in rental rates while the region and state were seeing rent increases.
- These poorly maintained and managed rental properties were a detriment to our community as centers for crime and social dysfunction.



Improved Housing = Strong Neighborhoods



Our Solution:

Apartment Inspection

- Basically a government intrusion into a private sector business - enforcing housing, zoning code and building standard ordinances and regulations
- Very controversial in Sacramento region where we have a strong Rental Housing Association
- Most inspection ordinances blocked in surrounding jurisdictions by the rental housing owners
- Typical ordinance was seeking \$30-\$50/rental door for pay for universal inspections
- *We chose a slightly different path...*



Results - Before and After



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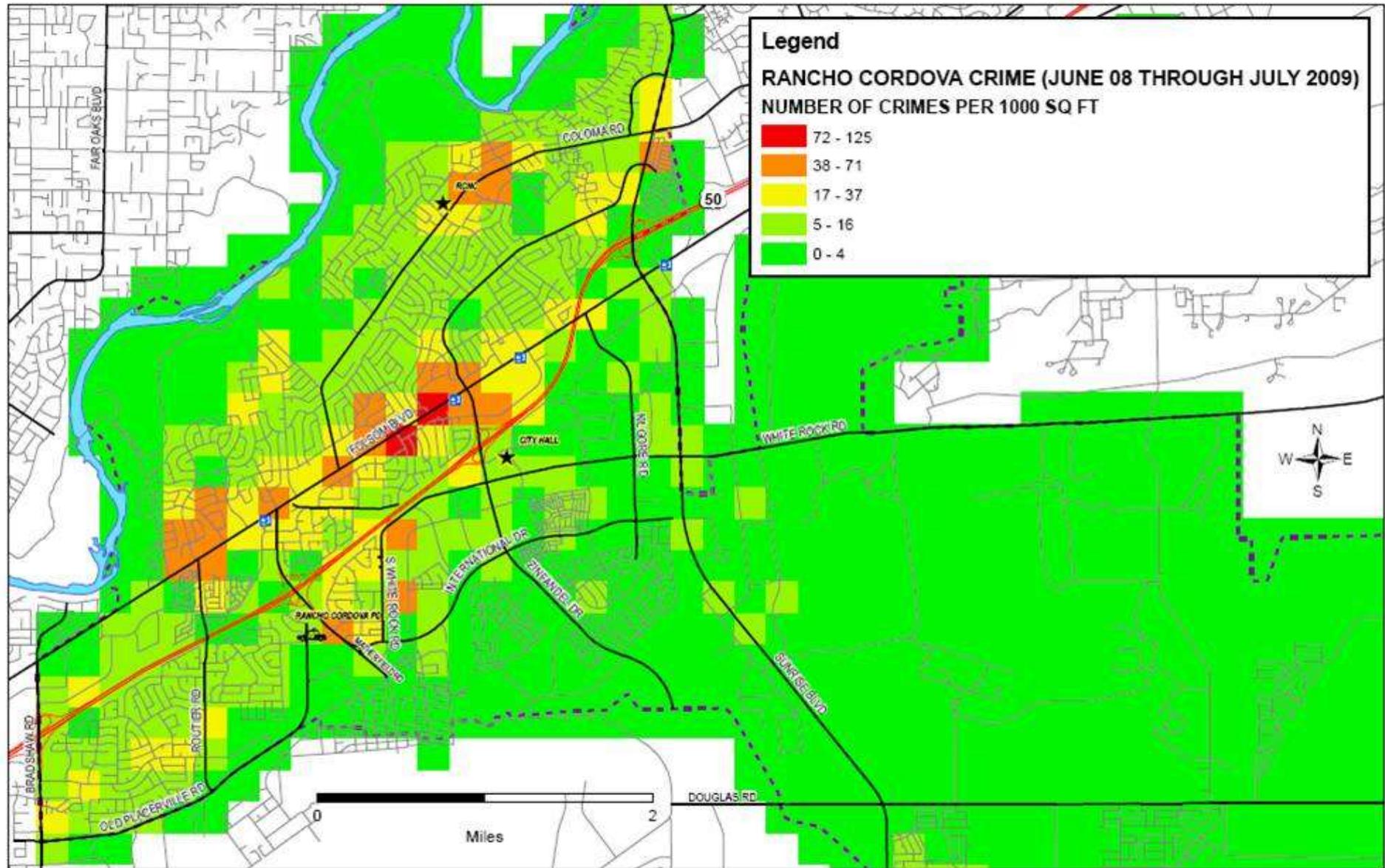


Focus on Fifty

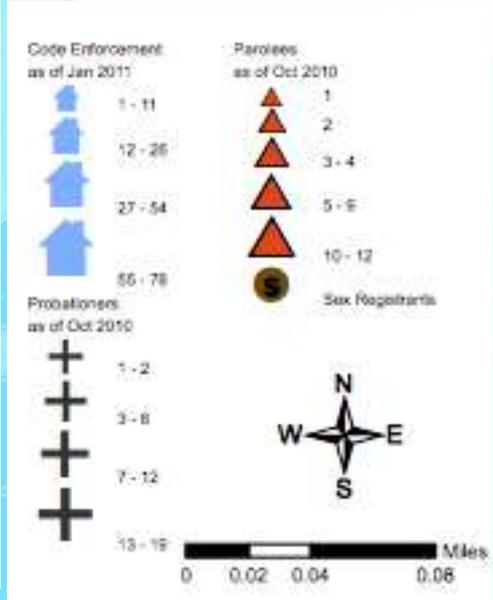
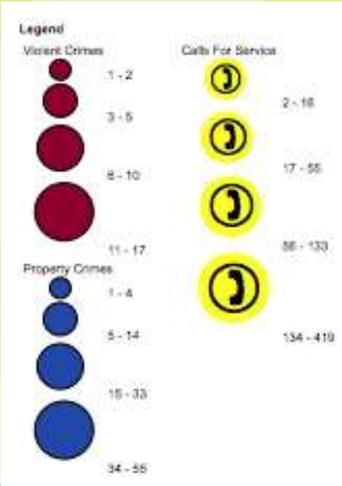
- Problem properties usually have more than one issue that's making them problematic – where there are police calls, there are code issues, etc.
- Silo-based organizations often don't notice the overlapping issues
- Identify and Target the bottom 50 “problem properties” by using overlapping risk indicators
- Use technology to acquire data: police and code calls, truancy, unpaid property taxes, parolees, fire calls, foreclosure, etc.
- Similar to Blightbusters, conduct comprehensive sweeps of identified properties with cooperation of RCPD, Code Enforcement, Building Inspectors, probation/parole, fire and other outside agencies



Crime Data



Focus on 50 Data



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Policing and Enforcement

“Broken Windows” theory is applied to avoid anti-social behavior through the diligent maintenance of a well-ordered environment.

- *Can apply enforcement to many unique situations, using on-hand resources*
 - Apartment Inspections
 - Commercial Corridor Enhancements – Use Restrictions along Folsom Blvd.
 - Rental Home Inspections
 - Transient Enforcement – TED
 - Probation Sweeps – Probation Partnership
 - Light Rail Fare Sweeps
 - Specific Areas of Enforcement – RJETS
 - GIS Created List of Hotspots – Focus on 50



Image Enhancements

- Efforts to make your community more attractive to homebuyers and investors
 - Branding and Marketing Campaigns
 - Events – Community Council Partnership
 - The Arts, embrace cultural diversity
 - *Caution: These have to be substantial and real honest efforts to have a good effect*
- Working with faith-based and other non-profit partners can have great benefits, and are likely essential to these efforts



Development as a Solution

- o Theory: Use cutting edge planning and development assistance to reinvigorate old commercial zones and corridors
 - *Challenge: This has to pencil out and be economic*
 - *Existing Infrastructure & Incomes are major barriers*
- Create opportunity for densification and infill by using better planning
 - Special planning zones, overlays, etc.
- New Urbanism
 - Retrofit suburbia with more placemaking development, TODs, creating a diversity of housing and walkable sustainable neighborhoods
- Subsidize / enhance development using public resources



Housing Rehabilitation

Fact: Over 30 million homes have remodeling done every year in the U.S.

- Suburbs Fail when people choose to move elsewhere, usually to newer housing
 - Mature suburbs need to compete
- Find ways to ease the major and minor remodeling projects homeowners undertake
 - Loan Programs
 - Master Architectural Plans for common types of homes - effective in cookie cutter neighborhoods
- Affordable Housing Rehabilitation
 - Often the most accessible and available type of state/federal assistance
 - Many programs (Section 8) overpopulated in FTS
 - **Caution:** *ULI and other studies suggest an over-concentration of affordable housing correlates with declining communities, not restored communities.*





Important Concluding Thoughts...

You now know what we're doing and why we're doing it.

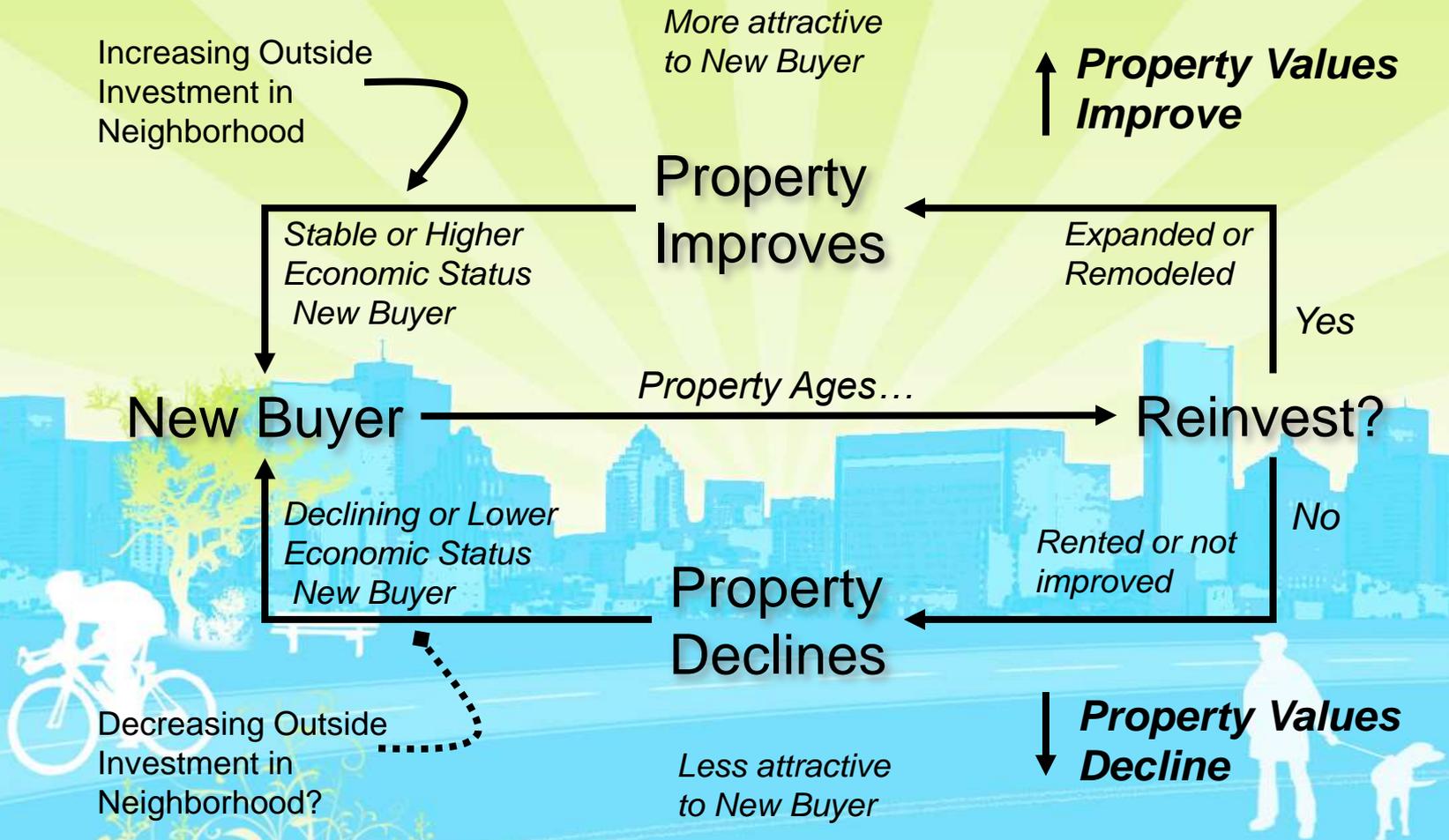


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Property Values Cycle in Aging Neighborhoods



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5. **Growth** – *Is this community growing and healthy or is it dying? New Homes? New investment?*
6. **Transportation Accessibility** – *What's my commute? Can I easily get around?*
7. **Aesthetics & Recreation** – *What amenities?*





Every city employee has a role in improving Rancho Cordova.

Every city resident is a partner in improving Rancho Cordova.

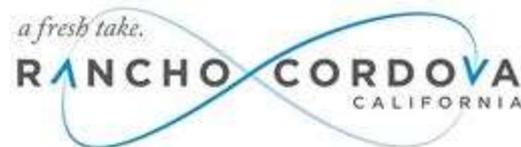
Working smart, and working together – there is no limit to what we can achieve.





- Questions?

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GROWING STRONG

Neighborhoods

IN THE CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA