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## CITY OF SANTA ANA

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### Overview of Community Development Resource Network

Santa Ana is a southern California city of 345,000 people which is in the process of reinventing itself. When we received designation as a federal Empowerment Zone in 1999; our community had a significant problem. This was not a problem associated with poverty or blight; rather the realization that financial resources alone could not sustain the improvements our community expected. In theory, the Empowerment Zone carried with it a \$100 million commitment over ten years, nevertheless local organizations continued to cite their lack of financial resources. This realization was a turning point for Santa Ana's Resource Network, a long term and asset based-community development strategy that is cost-effective, sustainable and improves the effectiveness of the hundreds of community-based organizations that consider Santa Ana to be their arena and who serve our residents.

Our community has been both creative and resourceful in working with residents and neighborhood groups. In fact, there are hundreds of community-based organizations in Santa Ana. They include our 60 neighborhood associations, nearly 50 parent groups at schools, over 100 faith-based organizations, 25 service clubs and over 200 non-profit social service agencies not to mention the municipal agencies and private companies with an interest in civic engagement. The Community Development Resource Network was developed through a collaboration of community-based organizations and Santa Ana's Community Development Agency in an effort to demonstrate the benefits of networking and recognition, strategic planning, information sharing and increased collaboration.

As part of the Resource Network, Santa Ana's neighborhood associations have been a very effective vehicle to encourage citizen participation for over twenty years. The experience of each neighborhood in our community is different whether that be in the areas of their history, leadership, the built environment or current issues and concerns. Each neighborhood is able to receive support from Santa Ana's Community Development Agency and is able to access assistance in the areas of capacity building and leadership training. Santa Ana residents typically find that they are able to focus on what they have in common through their neighborhoods and through their association, magnify the impact of their efforts. Neighborhood associations in Santa Ana are the institutionally recognized citizen participation vehicle and this opens many doors for residents who chose to be active. In addition, the Communication Linkages Forum (Commlink) further serves to represent the leaders of Santa Ana's diverse neighborhoods and is comprised of a seven member Board of Directors elected by the leadership of our neighborhoods. Commlink's work is ongoing and typically addresses issues of citywide interest, i.e. public policy in the areas of safety, development, finance and community standards. The group has a 10+ year track record of success and has monthly general membership meetings that are open to the public.

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The initial creative elements of our Resource Network were inspired by "Building Communities from Inside Out" by McKnight & Kreitzman from the University of Northwestern. We were further inspired by the "Better Together" report published by the Saguaro Seminar in December of 2000. This material helped win over skeptics and build credibility for our asset-based model in Santa Ana. It also allowed our CBOs to tailor the following initiatives to meet community needs:

1) Networking and Recognition - Building our resource network required the recognition of CBOs that our community benefits when formal and informal networks are strengthened. The need to provide greater recognition of the innovation in community building was another area of common ground. We've now hosted eight annual "Celebrate Santa Ana" events for resource network members at which groundbreaking workshops and community-building awards have been presented.

2) Strategic Planning - Acting on behalf of CBOs, our Resource Network secures web based information services in the areas of grant locating, demographic statistics and GIS maps and provides free consults to share this information. Through this approach, information technology is made more accessible to our community.

3) Information Sharing - We improve community cohesion by strengthening the on the ground intelligence among CBOs through our neighborhood associations, "e" mail news group, quarterly Newsletter, Internet Community Calendar and video teleconferences

4) Encouraging Collaboration - CBOs, Faith-Based organizations and Service Clubs now know they can magnify their impact by working together. Our privately funded Grants for Blocks Program is another tool to help grass root organizations to gain capacity and a track record. This program is entirely funded through private corporate and foundation support.

Refer to our web site <http://www.santa-ana.org/cda/ResourceNetwork1.asp> for resource information or contact our District Manager- Scott Kutner at (714) 667-2259.