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### Partner Agencies Work Together to Transform Challenged Area of the City

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*New \$2.3 million community stabilization project complements Byrne crime prevention and Waterman Gardens redevelopment projects*

**SAN BERNARDINO** – NHSIE (Neighborhood Housing Services of the Inland Empire) announced this week that it is launching a new project aimed to renew what has been a challenged central area of San Bernardino through bolstering home ownership and improving quality of life for area residents.

“We are excited to be part of the revitalization efforts focused in the central area of San Bernardino,” said Dawn Lee, executive director of NHSIE. “One agency can’t transform this community alone, and we are pleased to be working together with the Institute for Public Strategies, Center for Asset Building Opportunities, YouthPower Community Solutions, National Community Renaissance (National CORE), Habitat for Humanity, the Housing Authority of San Bernardino County, together with the City of San Bernardino, the faith based community and local residents to apply evidence-based and innovative place-based solutions that will help this area turn the corner.”

This project – with an anticipated budget of \$2.3 million -- expands and complements current efforts of the Byrne crime prevention project and the redevelopment of Waterman Gardens. It targets a 2.5-mile (60 block) area of central San Bernardino which encompasses these other related projects. This new project seeks to foster redevelopment there via a three-pronged approach addressing:

- **Physical conditions**—rehabbing and selling vacant or abandoned homes, helping homeowners with property improvements, helping landlords improve their properties with facade and CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design) improvements, and increasing curb appeal.
- **Quality of life**— improving livability and desirability, development of financial capabilities, job readiness, and leadership skills as well as empowering residents to serve as leaders and advocates to work with landlords and other stakeholders to improve quality of life and reduce crime. Central to this component will be development of financial capabilities, job readiness, and leadership skills for children, youth, and young adults in the target area.
- **Economic conditions**—enable residents to purchase or maintain homes and build assets as well as providing homebuyer education and down payment assistance to buyers in the target area, and facilitating other lending, helping them improve credit, achieve homeownership and maintenance goals.

“Our goal is to build a safe, sustainable community,” says Sandra Espadas, regional director with Institute for Public Strategies. “To achieve that we need a comprehensive approach that involves all

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sectors of the community including law enforcement to address the underlying conditions that have plagued this neighborhood for years.”

The recession and foreclosure crisis had an impact in this community leaving an abundance of vacant and abandoned properties. This resulted in persistent blight and undesirable appearance, low property values, and high crime rates.

“Safe, affordable housing is central to the ability of this community to leave behind its significant challenges,” said Jack Olree, vice president of community development with Wells Fargo, one of the funders of the project. “Our Priority Markets Grant Program helps facilitate homeownership in challenged and recovering areas which helps stabilize and reinvigorate these neighborhoods.”

Vacant homes shelter homeless residents and drug-users, creating a safety hazard with fire risk and discarded needles and filling lots with trash and discarded furniture. Although economic indicators are improving, neighborhood appearance and conditions have not followed suit. Several factors contribute to this environment of blight and decay. Neighborhood homeownership rates in the area are about 15-25 percent depending on the block, with some lower than 10 percent.

For those who do own their homes, repairs are costly, and residents must defer maintenance without the resources to address issues. To add to this with several apartments and absent landlord-owners, maintenance and upkeep have not been prioritized. All of this contributes to a lack of pride in the neighborhood and a lack of motivation to improve homes and public spaces.

“It makes sense to work together and leverage resources,” said Councilman Benito Barrios. “This collaborative approach is critical to our success in transforming this community from one of last resort to one of choice.”

“Collaborative efforts such as this are key to transforming neighborhoods and entire cities,” said Alexa Washburn, Vice President of National CORE, which is leading the redevelopment of Waterman Gardens. “We are delighted to work with these incredible community partners in revitalizing this critical area of San Bernardino.”

### Highlight

It announces a new initiative aimed to dovetail with the current Byrne crime prevention and the Waterman Gardens redevelopment projects aimed to help transform the area into a much more desirable place to live, work, and do business.

### About NHSIE

*Neighborhood Housing Services of the Inland Empire is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create homeownership opportunities, bridge the housing affordability gap, and build sustainable communities of choice one person, one home, and one neighborhood at a time. NHSIE is an affiliate of NeighborWorks® America, established by Congress in 1978 to increase the capacity of local community-based housing organizations and an affiliate of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), a national civil rights and advocacy organization that focuses on improving opportunities for Hispanics.*

### Press Contacts:

Gabriela Torres, NHSIE, [gabriela.torres@nhsie.org](mailto:gabriela.torres@nhsie.org), 909-963-5224

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### Contact Us

1390 N. D Street  
 San Bernardino, Ca 92405

Phone: [1 909 884 6891](tel:19098846891)

Fax: 1 909 884 8899

