

# East Lawrence Neighborhood Association

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Mayor Shipley and City Commissioners:

The East Lawrence Neighborhood Association (ELNA) is pleased that Strong Welcoming Neighborhoods are a priority in the City of Lawrence Strategic Plan. After a history of strained relationships between City Hall and Lawrence neighborhoods, this prioritization is a welcome change. Several City departments have been working very proactively toward creating collaborative relationships with East Lawrence and other neighborhoods by attending our neighborhood meetings and reaching out in additional ways to provide information and seek input.

The key to effective collaboration is effective communication to promote civic engagement. In that regard, we are disappointed that our neighborhood (and presumably others) did not receive more advance notice that the report on this strategic goal would be an agenda item so we could have had adequate time to prepare detailed comments. Since it appears that this will be an ongoing discussion, we are hopeful that future reports can be calendared with more advance notice.

ELNA suggests that there are additional topics that are worthy of inclusion in the Strong Welcoming Neighborhoods indicators. Traffic safety is of primary concern to residents of East Lawrence, as well as neighborhoods throughout Lawrence. The volume and speed of vehicular traffic on neighborhood streets is of concern everywhere, regardless of demographics. Another topic of particular concern to specific neighborhoods, including ours, is food deserts. Like some of the other indicators, food deserts could be measured as the distance from a full-service grocery store with affordable, healthy, fresh food options. When we are looking to promote equity, nothing is more basic than food. For East Lawrence and other neighborhoods, traffic safety and access to healthy food are two key quality of life indicators.

The best way to achieve community agreement on priorities within the Strong Welcoming Neighborhoods strategic goal is through focused conversation. The four neighborhood associations that previously received modest CDBG funding worked collaboratively on a draft framework to promote neighborhood engagement. The draft was sent in October to the City Manager and the then-serving City Commissioners, and copied to LAN. ELNA is hopeful that this draft proposal can be discussed in the near future and can form the basis for future collaborations, discussions and decisions.

We look forward to making substantive comments on various of the indicators after we have had the opportunity to do a more complete review. Thank you for your partnership in assuring that Strong Welcoming Neighborhoods are an important lens through which all municipal policies are viewed.

Sincerely,

Barry M. Shalinsky  
President, on behalf of the ELNA Board

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